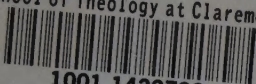
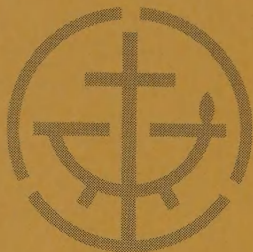


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The Higher Ministries of Recent English Poetry

FRANK W. GUNSAULUS, D. D., LL. D.

*"A new commandment," said the smiling Muse,
"I give my darling son, Thou shalt not preach;" —
Luther, Fox, Behmen, Swedenborg, grew pale,
And, on the instant, rosier clouds upbore
Hafiz and Shakespeare with their shining choirs.*

—EMERSON.



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*To the class of 1907
just graduated from the
Chicago Theological Seminary
before whose members these lectures
were delivered,
I now dedicate them with every prayer
and hope which happy recollection
and sincere love may inspire.*

FRANK W. GUNSAULUS.

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The Higher Ministries of Recent English Poetry

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

THE LITERARY PHASES OF THE RELIGIOUS PROBLEM

NEXT to religion, poetry is the most vital, and, at the same time, the most far-reaching of those movements of the human soul by which it declares its depths of feeling and its heights of aspiration. Verse is the innocent manifestation of the primal music of humanity, as the seer, the Vates, stands with man and the mysteries which surround him. Along with the smoking altar comes the ballad of the remotest savage; and the latest child of culture begins to see that if the word *minister* is to go out of his vocabulary, that other word *minstrel*, joined with it in the same ancient root, will perhaps depart also. The Psalmist, if he be truly such, is as much a poet as he is a religionist.

These relationships of poetry and religion exist because of the part which imagination and feeling play in both. In these days, when it is hoped that devotion may a little supplant both our rationalistic scepticism and our over-intellectual dogmatism, we hear much of the "religious feeling"; and we are able the more certainly to see that there can be no religion without imagination to give an atmosphere to our aspiration and to furnish visions under which hope and fear may grow. And it is another of the results of the critical and constructive thinking of our time that poetry appears to be the art by which things are felt, seen and expressed in the atmosphere of imagination.

Nowhere has the loftiest ground which the human spirit knows in its religion lifted more surely into sight as the field for true poetry, than in modern England. Indeed, the choicest garlands which have been hung about the rich sacrifices and holy fanes, and the most exquisite of the flowers which have been plucked by genius to deck the poet's lyre, have grown upon a common territory and extracted their fragrance and beauty from a

common earth and atmosphere. "The more I reflect on the conformation of the English mind, and on the preëminence of the moral being, and the necessity for regarding nature through the eyes of the moral being, from first to last," says Taine, "the more clearly do I arrive at an understanding of the strong and innumerable roots of that serious poem which is here called religion."

Nothing is more sure to reward the minister's study than his becoming acquainted with these "strong and innumerable roots of that serious poem which is called religion," as those roots are to be discovered and rightly appreciated in the blossoms of poetical literature which have done so much to glorify and make fragrant the air which we breathe ; his studying the great poems of contemporary English bards, with reference solely to what of light and leading they may offer to our interesting age and finding, if possible, the special messages that they may bring, which infuse the spirit of religion, teach the beauty of holiness, impel the utterance of that goodness from within us—the speech of what has

too often gone dumb hitherto. In short, we ought to acquire what riches may lie in the words of those who perhaps only delight us, when, but for our lack of reverent appreciation, they might inspire and lead us, and, having handled some of these treasures, to make them our own. Of course, it will be seen at once that this task will not include the labours of the critic, so called, nor will it demand the more pleasing efforts of a biographer, save in the mention of certain personal facts which have given character to the poetry which is treated. It is not ours to discuss the question, which the presence and writings of such differing and powerful men as Swinburne and Browning have made interesting, as to whether a poet is to be expected to have a moral aim and to teach the truth by which men are to form their lives; sufficient it is for us to seek to learn what we may of those, who, like Tennyson, never soar so high as when they utter the notes of faith; of those who, like Arnold, are quite as Grecian as Swinburne, and who yet feel that the greatest music has to do with the inner life of the spirit, or of those who, like Browning,

have seen most surely into both the flesh and the soul, and who, in many ways, have helped us to utter hope.

“ Let us not always say,
‘ Spite of this flesh to-day,
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the
whole ! ’

As the bird wings and sings ;
Let us cry : ‘ All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more now, than flesh
helps soul. ’ ”

First of all, then, in order that we may discover and value aright the real contribution which poetry has made to the spiritual powers and religious knowledge of our day, let us notice the forces which dominated and worked within the religious atmosphere more than a generation since, and those which have given character to the thoughts and feelings and purposes of the last forty years ; let us note the needs which then lay voiceless, and soon began and have continued to utter their cry to those who would have man realize the ideal in Christianity, which has been called “ looking up and lifting up.” Surely, we shall thus be able the more successfully to appreciate the lofty

priesthood of those who speak—"true thoughts, good thoughts, thoughts fit to treasure up."

Perhaps the most suggestive fact in the spiritual life of Englishmen of eighty years ago, so far as that life was taught or inspired by poetry, was the evident beginning of the dominance of the influence of Wordsworth over that of Byron. Lord Jeffrey had long before angrily said of Wordsworth's poetry: "This will never do"; Shelley had avowed that his imagination was as capacious as a pint cup; and many a lesser critic had announced how impossible it is to extract large meanings out of small things; yet the steady flame of Wordsworth's genius lived its quiet life, burning amidst much which yet seems prosaic enough and much which even yet must needs wait for appreciation until the complete triumph of the greater spiritual and intellectual forces of which Byron knew so little and Wordsworth so much; and at the death of the Laureate, his pure light was already beginning to illumine a larger area than that which had been alternately charmed and bewildered by the brilliant Lord Gordon. Byron's

genius had no power of generation; and quite as soon as the mind of England had exhausted the treasures which were stored so luxuriantly and carelessly in his verses, it was found that there were no sons to continue his throne, and that even his imitators had mistaken the unhealthful sentimentalities with which they toyed for evidences of a noble pedigree. To the age preceding a John Stuart Mill, a Charles Darwin, or an Ernest Renan, the fiery glow of Byron's genius had come with overwhelming visions of splendour, but upon his often prolix rhymes and brilliant powerlessness, it was sure the dawn would come to walk to noonday, and then they would be found to have been greater in the dim but spectral evening, than in the all-consuming morning-tide. For Byron's poetry was of the setting, while Wordsworth's was of the rising sun.

Byron and Wordsworth both stood in the remaining eddy of that revolution, wherein went whirling to final destruction, as it seemed, the faiths, political, social and religious, upon which men had been leaning for so long. The French Revo-

lution had cast them both loose from these revered traditions. Byron's joy often seems to shriek with laughter; beneath the rapture of Wordsworth's lies a solemn calm. With their political prejudices we have nothing to do, but, let it be noted, that after the Revolution had become unjustifiable to Wordsworth, as it was politically a failure to Byron, Byron's eyes beheld, in its massive manifestations of the strength of humanity, a sphere for the exercise of that fearful individualism of which he was such an incarnation; while Wordsworth, after a spiritual experience deep as his soul, though taking a strange route, wrote the noble lines of "The Prelude." Here is a witness of that spiritual vision which sent its glory throughout his entire intellectual life. It is the record of a faith which reaches far into the doubts of to-day, with a gift of power—a faith in the spiritual, eternal, and true, which rescues at once and authenticates all the truths of both individualism and socialism, by its consciousness of God.

"And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy

Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man ;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

Shelley has sent into the veins of our deepest religious life a far more fructifying impulse than Byron, though perhaps Byron died believing, to his soul's infinite harm, that the orthodoxy which he had been taught was really true, and, on the other hand, Shelley was an unbeliever who wrote upon Mont Blanc: "P. B. Shelley, Atheist." Certainly there is something very impressive in the fact that he who has written most profoundly in the spirit of the gospel, Robert Browning, has said that he thought if Shelley had lived, he would have come to accept the Christian faith. It requires but a reading of the words of Browning on Shelley to find how far into the richest poetical nature of our day this man's influence goes. It is not the Shelley of "Queen Mab," however, but the Shelley

of "Adonais" and "The Skylark." It was certain that if Wordsworth should prove stronger than Byron, to the most thoughtful men of a generation ago, Shelley would live more powerfully also in their life and thought. Shelley would have occupied this relative place, even though he had not possessed that instinct which enabled him easily to dream and sing with the largeness and lightness of the classic bards, or that pure spirituality which is never tarnished as it touches earth nor ever more splendid when it soars to heaven, or that genius in the rhythmic possibilities of a language which is as sure-footed as it is swift and as delicate as it is strong, or that devotion to the ideal which makes him the psalmist, who, at the shrine of beauty, makes his worship lyrical with song. Indeed, even if he had not possessed these, Shelley would stand in the generation of our fathers, just where Byron's genius began to lose its grasp upon the human soul, and, like a prophet uttering his truth amidst much blasting error, though with infinite music, he would look forward to a time with its Browning to write a

"Christmas Day" and "Paracelsus"; and to say of Shelley that when he read his words he seemed to have found "an eagle's feather."

For Shelley is the poet of the unsatisfied. No twentieth century, however weary she may be of doubt and analysis, can ever go back to the eighteenth, and avoid the protest of this clear-eyed soul,—a soul who abides at the gateway, the type of the yearning spirit pouring forth his lofty expectations in exquisite rhythm, uttering his pathetic scorn with sweetest music, the very incarnation of the restless heart and thirsty soul which, with heated forehead, utters the cry of the human. No one for the satisfaction of the soul would go back into the years which he tasted, as he sings :

"I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
To thee and thine ; have I not kept the vow !
With beating heart and streaming eyes even now
I call the phantom of a thousand hours
Each from his voiceless grave ; they have, in
 visioned bowers,
Of studious zeal or love's delight,
But watched with me the anxious night :
They know that never joy illumined my brow

Unlinked with hope that thou would'st free
 This world from its dark slavery,
 That thou, O awful Loveliness,
 Would'st give whate'er these words cannot express."

The French Revolution had touched his world, as it had touched that of Wordsworth and Byron ; it had destroyed many things ; it had left *man*.

"The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
 Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
 Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless.
 Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the King
 Over himself, just, gentle, wise."

And for *man* Shelley would aspire, though perchance there were no God ; if there were, he would still pray. But from this atheism, the unsatisfied gets no hope :

"Sweet Heaven, forgive weak thoughts ! If there should be
 No God, no Heaven, no Earth, in the void world,—
 The wide, gray, lampless, deep, unpeopled world — !"

So the restless spirit sang.

"The only wonderful man I ever knew," says Wordsworth, "was Coleridge." Passing now to this other name, the name of a profoundly differing personality, we are not yet far from Shelley, in the attitude which the eighteenth century offered for the great problems of life. They were almost as little satisfactory to Coleridge as they could be to Shelley. It is with Coleridge that we pass from the influence of poetry, at the beginning of this century, to that of religious thought. For the reason that in Coleridge, the poet was easily metamorphosed into the religious thinker, he affords us less difficult passage. Indeed, his poetry was never so deeply influential as his prose, in creating the intellectual and spiritual life upon which Tennyson's artistic lines were to fall, or in enabling the singers of to-day to lead with tuneful harmony the doubting or stumbling feet which had been taught by the minds of that yesterday. Coleridge felt only slightly the throes of the great Revolution. He could not, however, resist his vision of Pantisocracy. "Strange fancies," he afterwards said, "and as vain as strange! Yet to the in-

tense interest and impassioned zeal, which called forth and strained every faculty of my intellect, for the organization and defense of this scheme, I owe much of what I, at present, possess—my clearest insight into the nature of individual man, and my most comprehensive views of his social relations, of the true uses of trade and commerce, and how far wealth and relative power of nations promote and impede their welfare and inherent strength.”

But something else and something more precious our fathers were able to obtain from Samuel Taylor Coleridge, without some understanding of which we can never value justly the voices of our English bards. Coleridge was to bring into English thought, as it would concern itself with the great topics, a force from Germany, which, under the management of his strong spirit, was to create a new epoch in Christian England. Of course, with the metaphysics and technical philosophy of religion, we have no present concern, but it would be quite impossible either to estimate the forces with which any modern leader of humanity has to do, or to see aright the ruling ideas with

which most of our truest singers inspire us, without noting how, not only as the creator of England's modern criticism, but as a student of religious truth, Coleridge influenced the age. As Browning's essay on Shelley shows how that fine soul influences a spirit so unlike his, so Carlyle's life of John Sterling will indicate how very living was the power of Coleridge's genius upon a totally dissimilar man. Tennyson's purest song in "In Memoriam" or in "The Idylls of the King" cannot be fully heard, until we have learned enough of Coleridge's spirit to feel the earnestness of that invitation which the late poet once gave to one of the finest spirits whom Coleridge had influenced, Frederick Denison Maurice.

The truth is that the time had come for men to obtain a deeper and surer hold upon what were called the facts of religion than that which they had, or to let them go entirely. The very heterodoxy of the past dissatisfied Shelley; the orthodoxy of the past which claimed the present, was too weak for Coleridge. By the help of the genetic men in Germany, this English thinker was able in that hour to

do great service. Take, for example, the ideas each of which was given, as the *sine qua non* of every religious person, on the inspiration of the sacred writings. Thoughtful and wide-minded men, like this man, felt that the blind devotion which staked its life upon verbal infallibility and literal inspiration was sure to suffer defeat, if not to invite the wreck of faith. Religion was seen to be independent of certain traditions of the past as to the proper reasons for believing in a book which contained the precious story of the Christ. Coleridge would not depend for evidence of the divine inspiration of the Bible only upon the tradition which, in many instances, modern inquiry had already begun to tear to pieces. He said of the Bible: "I take up this work with the purpose to read it for the first time as I should read any other work,—as far, at least, as I can or dare. For I neither can nor dare throw off a strong and awful prepossession in its favour—certain as I am that a large part of the light and life, in and by which I see, love, and embrace the truths and the strengths coörganized into a living body of faith,

and knowledge has been derived to me from the sacred volume." "If between this Word—The Word that was in the beginning—the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world—if between this Word and the written letter, I shall anywhere seem to myself to find a discrepancy, I will not conclude that such there actually is; nor, on the other hand, will I fall under the condemnation of them that would lie for God, but, seek as I may, be thankful for what I have,—and wait."—"In the Bible, there is more that finds me than I have experienced in all other books put together; the words of the Bible find me at greater depths of my being, and whatever finds me brings with it an irresistible evidence of having proceeded from the Holy Spirit."

Many a soul has had his Bible saved to him and has seen the great facts of the religious life entirely secure in the midst of much that was perishable, by thus being the remote recipient of these ideas. He has dared to be inspired by the Bible—to be *found* by its teaching; and he confesses proofs of its inspiration. But Coleridge's genius carried its stirring

influence into many other departments of religious thought. He contended earnestly for the self-evidencing nature of revealed religion. To historical and miraculous truth, he may be said to have assigned a secondary place. Grasping the idea of the Incarnation, he held that miracles were the needful outcome of the great fact; and he taught that the adaptation of truth to the moral nature constituted its strongest evidence. "He who begins by loving Christianity better than truth will proceed by loving his own sect and church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all." The air men breathed seemed freer and more healthful. The faith of the ages did not falter as fearfully in the presence of rationalism, though the rationalistic spirit was confessed. Fantastic assumptions faded out of sight. The church assumed a broader function and was seen to have more lasting foundations. The day of reverent criticism for every page of scripture and of open discussion of every topic of theology was welcomed. A new atmosphere had come.

Let us stop here with Shelley, Cole-

ridge, and Wordsworth, and note these facts :—that each was influenced by the revolution in France ; that each had dreams of that perfect humanity of which visions came over the storm and wreck ; that each had broken in some way with the prevalent modes of thought and the opinions of the age preceding ; to each, neither the views which scepticism nor those which the church held of the truths of religion were entirely satisfactory ; and, especially, that in each of these men there is a distinct revolt from the cold and formal ideas which scepticism, on the one hand, and the church, on the other hand, had of Almighty God.

Shelley, for instance, would not rest content with the atheism which he himself had written ; and from the unchurchly and churchly Deism of his time, which conceived of God afar off, unrelated in any vital or living way to earth or man, he stood at an equal distance. He was not long in finding the unsatisfactoriness of the doctrine of “Queen Mab,” and in the fragment which he left of his intended treatise on Christianity occurs this strong passage : “There is

a power by which we are surrounded, like the atmosphere in which some motionless lyre is suspended, which visits with its breath our silent chords at will. Our most imperial and stupendous qualities—those on which the majesty and the power of humanity is erected—are, relatively to the inferior portion of its mechanism, active and imperial, but they are the passive slaves of some higher and more omnipotent power. This power is God ; and those who have seen God have, in the period of their purer and more perfect nature, been harmonized by their own will to so exquisite a consentaneity of power as to give divinest melody, when the breath of universal being sweeps over their frames.”

He was, in truth, never more sure to go astray than in his accounts of his own belief on religious matters, except perhaps when he mistook his perfectly characteristic idealism for Plato's, and thought himself a Platonist. Shelley was, at times, in desperate earnestness bent on being an atheist, but the great truth of the *immanence of God* kept bursting forth from within his soul ; it was blazing out

before him from the fiery heart of earth and uttering its presence to him in the richness and warmth of quiet days and nights; and that truth, when it was caught up alone, without the other truth of the Supreme one, namely, the *transcendence of God*, made him a Pantheist. God transcends the world—that idea had been preached and poeticized so long that the world of nature and man seemed thoroughly disassociated from its Creator and Lord. It is hardly to be wondered at that so protesting a soul, and so truly a mystic as he was, should thus fall back upon Pantheism—that faith which in all times has had such an attraction for rare souls such as Scotus Erigena and Spinoza. The age was dominated by a practical Deism which made God, not the Supreme Creative Vitality whose impulse and powers are felt everywhere, but a *Deus ex Machina*—a far-away being which had sometime created and now looked on to see how the universe, wheels, cogs, and all would run. The sympathetic imagination of Shelley had no faith in or for such a barren spectre.

He turned to nature and saw at least

the "Spirit of Beauty"; he even detected at times an "awful loveliness" in man, and along

" the beaten road
Which these poor slaves with weary footsteps
tread,
Who travel to their home among the dead
By the broad highway of the world."

This, impersonal as it was, was more to him than that huge fiction which much of the poor Theism and all of the confessed Deism of his day held in awe. He embraced it under different names, and wrote a subtle Pantheism.

Coleridge, however, appeared to be yet more annoyingly pantheistic, because he wrote theology; and the theologians of his day, with many good people of our own who do not see the truth which much of our Theism has shut out and which Pantheism takes in, join in this quite ignorant indictment. It is asked: did he not become a mystic, as perplexing as Jacob Boehme, and question:

"What if all animated natures
Be but organic harps diversely framed,

That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps,
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the soul of each, and God of all—" ?

The answer is: Coleridge did shake from his sensitive spirit the mechanical ways which the eighteenth century had consecrated as the only methods of truth-finding. But did not this seer of Highgate, unpleasantly distinguishing, as Carlyle tells us, "Om-mject" from "Sum-mject," with nasal twang, so repeat the thought of Schelling to Englishmen and so reprint Neoplatonism and reissue the idealism of Germany, that even he became the apostle of doctrines dear to Spinoza? The reply must be that this man, into whose English soul had come, through German avenues, the ideas of the unity of all realities, the primacy of spirit, the absoluteness of God, did escape the conceits of the Evangelicals, as they were called, and the vicious realism of the sceptics, by insisting, oftentimes to the exclusion of the corresponding truth, upon the oneness of the Reason which we call God with the Reason which was within him, and is the "Light which lighteth every man coming

into the world." If this is Pantheism, or if it leads to Pantheism, one has still to say with Carlyle: "And what if it be pot-theism, if it is true."

But of Wordsworth I have already quoted part of the famous passage from the "Prelude," which has often brought the charge of Pantheism to his door, and I aver to any one who accepts the dictum of Aristotle: "Poetry is a thing more philosophical and mightier than history"; and who would see the difference between Christian Theism and any sort of Pantheism, no poet will so richly reward studious attention as does he. Christian Theism includes the truth in all Pantheism, just as Wordsworth did in his thought of life and nature. He added idealism to the realism of the hour. He tells us: "I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times, while going to school, have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from the abyss of Idealism to reality. At that time I was afraid of such processes. In later periods

of life I have deplored, as we all have reason to do, a subjugation of an opposite character, and have rejoiced over these remembrances."

Whether the "Ode" is or is not what it has been called—a "clear reminiscence of Platonism," a comprehensive Theism, which postulates the *immanence* of God, as Deism does not, which also clings to the transcendence of God, as Pantheism cannot, desires no loftier strain. If the Transcendentalists of New England loved it, not less do those of the Wordsworthian school love it. If it is to Emerson "the best modern essay on the subject," and "the high-water mark of English poetry," so was this poem to Newman or Phillips Brooks. If this passage suggests Fichte—

"This is the genuine course, the aim, the end
Of prescient reason ; all conclusions else
Are abject, vain, presumptuous, and perverse,
The faith partaking of these holy times."

"Life, I repeat, is energy of Love,
Divine or human ; exercised in pain,
In strife, or tribulation, and ordained,
If so approved and satisfied, to pass
Through shades and silent rest, to endless joy"—

it also suggests one who said: "In Him we live, and move, and have our being," as also his Master, preaching, "God is Love," "The kingdom of God is within you." If this passage is like the Pantheism of Schelling —

"Thou, who didst wrap the cloud
Of infancy around us, that Thyself
Therein, with our simplicity, awhile
Might'st hold, on earth, communion undisturbed;
Who, from the anarchy of dreaming sleep,
Or from the death-like void, with punctual care,
And touch as gentle as the morning light,
Restorest us, daily, to the powers of sense
And reason's steadfast rule. Thou, Thou alone
Art everlasting, and the blessed Spirits,
Which Thou includest, as the sea her waves,
For adoration Thou endurest; endure
For consciousness the motion of Thy will;
For apprehension those transcendant truths
Of the pure Intellect that stand as laws;
Submission, constituting strength and power,
Even to Thy Being's infinite majesty"—

is like the Theism of John. The first two lines are as far from Pantheism as they could be, and the rest of the passage is only the poetic glow he has given to the

fact that God is not only *over all* but *in all*. There is no fatalism here. All is balanced with the idea of personality, and, so far from saying that the "Spirits" of men are God, as waves are the sea, he only says that God includes them thus. It is a vision of a universe filled with life and it has no strain in which Christian Theism does not join; but that Christian Theism has included the truth which is in Pantheism.

Wordsworth's influence has gone into the literature of description. Nature has seemed to have a gospel for our unnaturalness which we may well heed. These ideas of man, and of nature, it is useless to say, have been an occult but pervasive force operating in men's minds with gracious influence, and have contributed in places where they are likely least to be revered and confessed toward the strength and sanity of that great current of inquiry and philosophizing of which we are so conscious in our day, the scientific movement. It has been a lofty view of nature, whether openly Christian or not, which has been at the bottom of the matchless research of our

great scientific minds. It has been a very poetic view of nature, indeed, which has governed the thought and led the philosophizing of the first thinkers of the time ; Tyndall, Huxley, Darwin, Russell Wallace—each shows the touch upon his soul of that nobler conception of nature, which, without the seeming of cant, works in the poetry of him who stands at the opening of our epoch, uttering “nothing base.” These ideas have as largely instructed the religious consciousness of our day. Nature had been too much conceived as a “manufactured article” ; she was to become fresh and vital with creative power in every movement, as under the eye of Wordsworth. Had theology and religion thoroughly entered into communion with the God which Wordsworth saw in the movement of a seed and heard in its pain, that shameful ignorance which has stood up with pious curses and laborious refutation to oppose the development of our current philosophy of nature would never have confessed itself ; and there is as little of it as there is, because of that higher conception of nature and of God, which for those pregnant

years, his genius breathed into English thought.

I have thus held before you these three spiritual forces, because they, most of all the singers and thinkers of the generation which has influenced the leaders of ours, represent the thoughts and impulses which made the problem in the spiritual life which every worthy poet read to-day has sought to solve. Christian living, so far as it was under the influence of ideas at all, emerged from the eighteenth century, with its shallow scepticism, its easy manners, and its political storm, sure to meet the necessity of a thorough restatement of faith. Burns, in Calvinistic Scotland, was but the prophet of MacLeod Campbell, Norman Macleod and John Tulloch; and Byron and Shelley in England were the undeniable evidence that, in the souls of thoughtful people, questions as to the authority of the sacred books, the reality and character of the incarnation, the nature and extent of atonement, the place of reason, and the province of faith, the mysterious future, were rising to honest lips, and that the next generation should search for answers

to them in its highest literature. The poets have been the prophets of all time.

All these questions, too, were to be asked in an age when there should occur such an outward and upward movement in the march of the physical sciences as would bewilder those who were onlookers, with the number of overturned traditions and exploded theories as to the relations of mind and matter, the power of the human will and the fact of human responsibility, and the history of creation and of mankind on the earth. At the same time, when these questions were to be pressed in the midst of others which science was to present, there was to open around all humanity an atmosphere of most engrossing practicalism, wherein invention working along with science should astonish man with the wonders of hand and brain, saving labour and stimulating desire; new worlds of fact and idea discovered and developed; vast fortunes accumulated; great changes in the political features of the globe; slaves freed and wars avoided or carried on with unprecedented activity and tact; democracy steadily gaining upon the earth; and the practical

man at the front asking the philosophers and religionists what a Concord Summer School of Philosophy or a Church Congress is worth in dollars and cents.

Now, when thus the religious man came eighty years ago in England, to do his own thinking, the men, who most of all had represented those forces which were to both make his spiritual problem and help to solve it, were Shelley, Wordsworth and Coleridge. Their kind of spiritual leadership only might lead men out of the difficulties which they had done much to create. Not Walter Scott, who had added to modern days the atmosphere of mediæval romance, could safely transport the human soul to the day of George Eliot; John Keats, in his worship of beauty, could not with honeyed sweetness and melodious rhyme, lift the newly-stirred spirit from his fresh woodlands and ardent loves to the hours when a man of faith would solemnly ask the question: "Is life worth living?" The tender sentimentalities of Thomas Moore seem very tremulous indeed in the mind of a youth who is to face the abysses through which a Arthur Hugh Clough was compelled to

thread 'his way ere the light came, and even the associate of Coleridge and Wordsworth in that interest called "Lake Poetry" and in a common hope growing up out of the Revolution,—I mean Southey—either as the biographer of Nelson or of Wesley, could do little to prepare a mind for those questionings and delays of light which beset a Frederick W. Robertson or a John Stuart Mill.

As philosophical speculation and thoughtful questioning in Germany has rolled its tide over England, and the shout of the dissenter or the protest of the Evangelical churchman, or the predestinated insensibility of the Calvinist, has sought in vain to beat it back, Coleridge's unique teaching, which had been influenced by Schelling and yet had been faithful to the Church of God, has been appreciated; and it has also been valued when a verdant statesmanship and an ambitious churchmanship have filled the air with their cries. As venerable dogmatism has insisted on a Maurice or a Thomas Arnold or a MacLeod Campbell or an Arthur Stanley being wise above that which was written, or subscribing to

and defending dogmas as to the nature of God and the work of Christ and the destiny of man which repulse the moral sense and exile reason, the effect of this one voice which spoke to our fathers has been like that of the awaking hand which comes in the moment of some awful nightmare. As science has come in lately with precious burdens of rocks and shells, protoplasm and alkalis, and has dumped the new physical universe down upon the human soul, the yearning of Shelley only as informed by the spiritual philosophy of Coleridge has rescued the soul; and the vision of what nature is, which Wordsworth left, has remained so unshattered that the God who is *above all* and yet *in all* has never ceased to speak to listening and eager souls. In a noisy, self-asserting age, Wordsworth's calm has been felt like a benediction. In a time when liberty has meant license oftentimes, and when social discontent has sent its flame of hate and rage far up into the sky, the sturdy soul, who, at the beginning of our era breathed into the drops of our blood, has again sung his pæan of duty and his psalm of peace.

First, an admirer, then a condemner of the French Revolution, Wordsworth, like Burke, like all lovers of law, in his view of man, of nature and of the Divine, becomes the bridge over which the mind of England has gone from a Byronic alliance with revolution to a faith in evolution—in thought and civilization, as in nature so in progress—that dominance of law and truth of which Tennyson was our sweetest singer. So truly does God continue the education of the race; so fitly does Wordsworth stand as the great religious poet-teacher of an age preceding us and deeply influencing our own.

We thus find how much these poets have done to create that atmosphere in which Browning should write the words which so much worry outworn theories and yet so completely answer our most serious questions. Tennyson offers his "Flower in the Crannied Wall," and Matthew Arnold his exposition of the word of Saint Bernard, at this juncture. These men, each after his kind, were idealists. They stood in contrast with that earthy and mechanical realism which had not a dream or a reverie, and which had even

fought its way into the orthodoxy of the day. Shelley was carried into Pantheism; that idealism delivered Coleridge from a hard and cold view of God which left nature and the human soul godless; it made all of them, especially Wordsworth, Christian theists. He really believed in God and in His omnipresence. Their belief in Him did not, as Coleridge's thinking went to prove, allow the notion that He had expressed His will and love, issued His laws and worked by His holy spirit in Jewish days, or at any other time, to the exclusion of His mighty working in the hearts of all men. This conception prepared men's thought for the study of history in that fresh spirit and with that large illumination which Schliermacher has shown and Neander has illustrated. It is the same spirit which Niebuhr and Bunsen incarnated in Germany. Of its methods Milman and Arnold in England, and even Carlyle, have been examples. Since their day a new race of historians has come, but Coleridge's influence has remained supreme even with them. After Coleridge's influence had begun to spread, the whole

history of man became sacred history, in a sense which took nothing from the great books of the Bible, but which has aided the freedom and fostered the imagination of every student of history in the nineteenth century. God was in humanity and that made humanity, its literature, its civilization, its philosophy, everywhere interesting.

But God was also in the human-soul as the revelation of truth. "The light which lighteth every man coming into the world" was illumining to the soul and its pathways, if man would but trust it with more confidence. Here were, then, the beginnings of a Christian rationalism. Of course, theologians protested. They said: If it be thought that there is a divinity within the reason, if God be said to be within the soul answering to God without, then external revelation—the revelation of atonement and future rewards and punishments—will be questioned. They did not over-estimate the consequences of such an admission. They did not dwell too strongly upon the fact that if once reason could be consecrated by Christianity, reason would

surely make sad work with many a tradition and theory which was often said to be true because of the fact that some man dared to say it is unreasonable. But this influence prevailed. Christianity was not only to be a message of glad tidings, but the truest philosophy. These ideas, of course, did their work of preparation, invitation, inspiration; and they created and welcomed a very diverse race of English thinkers. John Henry, Cardinal Newman, claims Coleridge as the beginner of that High Church movement which landed him in Rome; the Broad Churchman, Frederick Denison Maurice, and so stern a Calvinist as Dr. William G. Shedd, walk together to strew rosemary on his grave. Edward Irving, with his splendid oratory, and Charles Kingsley, with his humane spirit—one an apostate, the other a devoted Churchman—owe their voices and messages largely to the author of the "Aids To Reflection."

Yet the lofty gifts of these men thus led and inspired did not reflect the supreme light of those who had led and inspired them. While Shelley made

nature leap and flower with sacred energies, Coleridge and Wordsworth taught that this God in humanity, in reason and in conscience, is also in nature. Nature's movement, her whole range of experience, the thundering sea and the breathing flower,—all partake with man in the life of God. To either of these, as we survey their poetry,

“The meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.”

Nay, so surely was God in nature that with Wordsworth, she has even a higher ministry than this.

“For, the man
Who, in this spirit, communes with the forms
Of nature, who, with understanding heart,
Both knows and loves such objects as excite
No morbid passions, no disquietude,
No vengeance, and no hatred—needs must feel
The joy of that pure principle of love
So deeply that, unsatisfied with aught
Less pure and exquisite, he cannot choose
But seek for objects of a kindred love
In fellow natures, and a kindred joy.”

Thus the imagination of England—a

power which, by the confession of Mr. Tyndall, has had so much to do with the courage, insight and achievements of modern science—has been by this Wordsworthian influence so allied to the mysterious soul of nature, that a distinctly poetic as well as awe-inspiring conception of what nature is, has come in some measure to all thoughtful persons. The rigid manufacturer's ideas of what a blade of grass is and what man is—these have gone, and we behold a theology and a science which have been accused, the one of bringing God so near and the other of making nature so vital, as to submerge Him within the physical universe.

The poetry of our age could not be true to the soul of man without having a deep sense of the value of contemporary science which has so long influenced our religion. Mr. Stedman has called attention to Wordsworth's remarkable words on the future relations of science and poetry—"a prophecy," says this critic, "which, half a century ago, could only have been uttered by a man of lofty intellect and extraordinary premonition of changes even now at hand."

“The objects of the poet’s thoughts,” says Wordsworth, “are everywhere ; though eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favourite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge,—it is as immortal as the heart of man. If the labours of men of science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the poet will sleep then no more at present ; he will be ready to follow the steps of the man of science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the science itself. The remotest discoveries of the chemist, the botanist, or the mineralogist will be as proper objects of the poet’s art as any upon which it can be employed. If the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us, another relation under which they are contemplated by the followers of the respective sciences, shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings.

If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarized to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus produced as a clear and genuine inmate of its household of man."

The hour which Wordsworth foresaw is here. The same science which has seemed to uproot religion has created new problems for the poet as well as the preacher, and the next century will declare, in its criticism, that it is one of the evidences of true poetry which issued from the human soul in an age which has been complained of as unpoetic, unromantic, realistic, that its song has incorporated into its somewhat involved melody the discoveries which would have broken down the slight philosophy of a simply romantic day, and that its music has gone on enriching and being enriched by the glad discoveries it has found in the enlarged knowledge of our time. So, also, the historian of religion, looking back upon an age when the scientific spirit had so thoroughly compelled men

to review their faiths, will see that in every torn but victorious spirit like Robertson, in every chivalrous soul like Maurice, there lay the fresh impulses of a high and personal leadership for the spiritual life of English-speaking peoples. Unquestionably this perfect understanding which Arnold, Browning and Tennyson have of the new relations which science has made to exist amongst old truths, and that perception which they give us of the significance of the newly-found truths to religious thought and to the spiritual life, have made them supremely helpful to our feverish and startled age. Singing on, as for the most part they do, with a sweetness and a power unsurpassed, we, who are perplexed with the discords between our faith and our knowledge, so that we are discordant too, at last take their hands, and the confidence which we have as to the sureness of the hold which they help men still to keep upon the primal realities of faith or the new hopes of man is rendered much more living by the discovery which we make in their song, that, at least as well as we, do they feel the pressure of the things which

have so distracted us. This knowledge of the subtle currents and evident waves in what Mr. Arnold calls "the sea of faith," which currents and waves have been set going not only by the advances of modern science and philosophy, but also by the poets and their songs, is, to the heart's great assurance, associated in the minds and songs of these poets with a reverence which invites into its awe the trembling souls which are songless; and it is also associated with a profound knowledge of human nature, a delicate and thoroughgoing understanding of the history of man, his griefs and aspirations; and this fact binds the mind of our time to the poet's message.

Poetry and religion have had much the same cause to stand for in their attitude towards science. When the ignorance of a daring unbelief has proclaimed "no God!" the muse has had a broken lyre and the priest a ruined altar. For poetry is as much an impossibility in a godless and spiritless universe as is religion. When the folly of a superficial student has announced the death of faith, the singer and the devotee, the minstrel and

the minister have felt a common fatality possible and impending. For the poet's imagination dies in the air of doubt, as truly as the religionist's prayer perishes in agnosticism—his imagination having the loftiest flight in an act of faith. How truly contemporary English verse in Arnold, Tennyson and Browning has shared the peril and the victory of faith, we will seek to discover in the succeeding lectures.

LECTURE II

MATTHEW ARNOLD

THE value of such a man as Matthew Arnold to those of us who have been less generously endowed and less thoroughly trained, who nevertheless have many of his spiritual interests, lies in his representative quality and function. In spite of his greater scholarship, finer vision, severer classicalism and less emotional religiousness, he shows us what we would experience with certain ideas and ideals if we could. He is so little a man of self-isolating genius and so much one of us all, albeit of intenser glow of radiation because of rarer purity and higher energy, that when he returns to us, after having encountered insuperable difficulties in his own effort to proceed far with certain ideas, and brings back to us a well-defined spiritual map and an account of those intimations which now he assures us are facts of the soul and its life, we may be entirely sure that he is express-

ing what we will see and feel and finally say when our powers and patience and duty make the journey and the return our own. Arnold's austere sincerity of mind works in genial harmony with an almost passionate devotion to the true scholar's function—the duty and privilege of stating the truths of which he is sure and pointing out the directions he deems most promising for men of like temper and restraint to take, if they will find more truths.

We must not grow weary of his iteration. He is always a teacher. Some things have needed repetition to our changeful minds and they are the things with which Arnold is most concerned. We cannot well spare the movement of the strings in the melodious utterance of current thought—a movement which was initiated by certain restless convictions which took up so often the phrase of Dean Swift and proved to us that “sweetness and light” mean “lucidity of mind and largeness of temper.” We cannot too often reflect that religion is at least “morality touched by emotion.” What he enforces so repeatedly as his praise of

the sense, splendour and speed of Homer, is always worth enforcing. What we miss may be something deep and luminous as to the substance of Homer ; but we must be content that Arnold has settled it that no translation of Homer will be approved which is not penetrated by a sense of Homer's four qualities : " he is eminently rapid ; he is eminently plain and direct in his syntax and in his words ; he is eminently plain and direct in his matter and ideas and finally that he is eminently noble." His recommendation of culture appears less valuable, now that it is in the blood of us all, and as something more than a recommendation. It was worth while saying it over and again, that the culture of the last quarter of the nineteenth century in England as he understood it, and religion as the orthodoxy of that day had misunderstood it, were likely and advantageously to change places as to their importance in men's thoughts. " As a harmonious expansion of all the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature," he averred, " culture goes beyond religion, as religion is generally conceived among us." Here

then we see, and we perceive that he sees his function. This was not so much an overestimate of culture as Arnold conceived it as a just exposure of some conceptions of religion. He is a Greek totally out of sympathy with a certain popular religious philosophy of God, man, and life. He will help us to see the Greek's failure. But we must see more if we shall rightly value him. We shall see what a true man, even though he be a Greek stoic, has the right to demand of any religion whatsoever. As a Greek, he had an inadequate view of what man must obtain from a true religion; but, on the other hand some who have what he fails to ask for in religion fail to ask for what this Greek has. No one knows better than he to what confusion this leads. He would honestly help the sick human soul. Yet even more descriptive of his own spirit, than of Goethe, are Arnold's well-known words :

“ He took the suffering human race ;
He read each wound, each weakness clear ;
He struck his finger on the place,
And said ‘ Thou ailest here, and here. ’ ”

The failure to find a remedy means

much, when such an able and sympathetic hand is searching for it. Some may jauntily conclude that the ailment "here and here" has been overstated and that nothing but an alleviation is necessary—it is very human to do this to foil our despair. The sheer mental force with which Arnold does this at times is warning enough to us who are weak. The greater manliness of mind, the totality of his moral and mental energies with which he oftener refuses to deny the malady and get on with a pleasant palliative is, on the other hand, an encouragement to us to be entire and true. More than this, also, we shall see, as we study his poems. The Greek's problem as to life is less serious than man's problem, but, assuredly, even the Greek's problem could find no adequate solution in religion as stated by the constituted authorities of English orthodoxy. It can find none to-day in any American iteration of it. And so, we may study in Arnold's poetry, with even more advantage than in his prose, these two phenomena—an inadequate statement of human need and an inadequate statement of Divine supply. Each reveals the

other. It required a man of extraordinary parts, highest culture and exquisite poise of mind, to stand between these, indeed to take them into his two hands, and, apparently unaware that the Greek idea and ideal of life only partially utters life's deepest cries, to balance them, to show off each in the presence of the other with a dexterity and irony so fine and a love for truth so urgent, that, at length this man became one of the most luminous teachers of a single truth with double phase whom any age has known. With his father's distinguished powers devoted to his training, he added to inherited gifts from Thomas Arnold himself, his own Greek spirit expressing itself in a flawless style now exemplified in literary monuments as faultlessly chiselled as Phidian sculpture. Admirably uniting in himself those qualities of the poet's personality which are greatest and whose union forbids any eccentricity of energy or even the display of one isolating note or mark, he gave what he himself called a distinction and style to forty years of thinking and feeling in both poetry and prose. He was so true a man, and yet he treated

the Greek idea and ideal of life so wisely and sincerely that, before his life had closed, his own soul and its progress had broken down the Greek equation of life as he proved the inadequacy of popular theology as a philosophy of life and destiny. Thus he left the field clear for Christianity of the sort Jesus preached. If his poetry and life teach anything, they teach the *probability* that Jesus as the revelation of God in man alone adequately meets and answers man's problem. This result came to Arnold at an awful cost. His latest vision came from a disaster to his early philosophy. What though, amid all the changes,

“Across his sea of mind,
The thought comes streaming like a blazing ship
Upon a mighty wind.”

What though the ship goes shoreward
burning as she runs aground; our sky has
been illumined; we know the sea better
and we may steer more wisely. The
beached ship is Greek stoicism; but the
mariner is safe.

Before we examine Matthew Arnold's

Greek cry for calm or goodness, beauty or culture, let us note that whatever we obtain from him is to be gained, not without some understanding between us that his views of God, nature and religion at productive moments had no alliance with those of the past which we have looked into,—that he is Wordsworth's disciple, that he thinks with the truth which lies in Pantheism ; he is often perplexing as to the personality of God ; he regards nature as something more than a manufactured article, and he views the whole life of man as a revelation of God. These things he believes deeply, perhaps no more deeply than did Plato, but not in Plato's manner. Arnold believes with an almost Puritanic strenuousness. He will have no mere connoisseur's relationship unto the face or heart of any truth. He sings :

“Man is blind because of sin,
Revelation makes him sure ;
Without that, who looks within,
Looks in vain, for all's obscure.”

Nay, look closer into man !
Tell me, can you find indeed

Nothing sure, no moral plan
Clear prescribed, without your creed?

“No, I nothing can perceive!
Without that, all's dark for men.
That, or nothing, I believe.”—
For God's sake, believe it then!

As a poet he embodies what he praises,
and the white-souled Milton had no finer
mental integrity. The muse of Arnold
wore the sackcloth beneath the radiance.

“That son of Italy who tried to blow,
Ere Dante came, the trump of sacred song,
In his light youth amid a festal throng
Sate with his bride to see a public show.

Fair was the bride, and on her front did glow
Youth like a star; and what to youth belong—
Gay raiment, sparkling gauds, elation strong.
A prop gave way! crash fell a platform! lo,

'Mid struggling sufferers, hurt to death, she lay!
Shuddering, they drew her garments off—and
found

A robe of sackcloth next the smooth, white skin.

Such, poets, is your bride, the Muse! young, gay,
Radiant, adorn'd outside; a hidden ground
Of thought and of austerity within.”

This amply endowed critic, a lyric bard with true Attic accent, and a most suggestive teacher of reverence for things religious has nevertheless a didactic use for the ideas just mentioned which often warms him to exhortation. For example, here he may appear to deny personality to God ; but he inculcates a message :

“ Yes, write it in the rock,” Saint Bernard said,
 “ Grave it on brass with adamantinè pen !
 ’Tis God Himself becomes apparent, when
 God’s wisdom and God’s goodness are display’d,

“ For God of these His attributes is made.”—
 Well spake the impetuous saint, and bore of men
 The suffrage captive ; now, not one in ten
 Recalls the obscure opposer he outweighed.

God’s wisdom and God’s goodness !—Ay, but
 fools

Mis-define these till God knows them no more.
 Wisdom and goodness, they are God !—what
 schools

Have yet so much as heard this simpler lore ?
 This no saint preaches, and this no Church rules ;
 ’Tis in the desert, now and heretofore.

This sonnet is, certainly, not a denial of

anything. It is new and strange to an anthropomorphic orthodoxy. But has not this a deeper faith in the Divine Omnipresence? Practically, we know that to obey Goodness or Truth is to obey God; and Arnold puts everything of a metaphysical or theological look into the alembic of practice. If it stands that heat, all is well; for "Conduct," he is always saying, "is three-fourths of life." Here is the larger, if also the higher, Pantheism which is hymned by Tennyson. Let one, if he must, insist that goodness is rather the fragrance than the flower, and truth is the sunlight but not the sun; then will Matthew Arnold spurn our metaphysics and its distinctions. He will say what is very cheering, in spite of his pervasive melancholy:

"Enough, we live!—and if a life,
With large results so little rife,
Though bearable, seem hardly worth
This pomp of worlds, this pain of birth;
Yet, Fausta, the mute turf we tread,
The solemn hills around us spread,
This stream which falls incessantly,
The strange-scrawl'd rocks, the lonely sky,
If I might lend their life a voice,

Seem to bear rather than rejoice.
 And even could the intemperate prayer
 Man iterates, while these forbear,
 For movement, for an ampler sphere,
 Pierce Fate's impenetrable ear ;
 Not milder is the general lot
 Because our spirits have forgot,
 In action's dizzying eddy whirl'd,
That something that infects the world."

Now that Something is God. If we are to take that Something into the realm of Conduct to which he always appeals to determine what is true—that realm where alone we may live a truth and find its truthfulness—we find not a mere doctrinal but a moral reason for identifying Goodness with God. Our idea of the All-Good is livable. God's idea of Himself is infinitely true in Eternal Being. His goodness is His glory. How does God conduct Himself? The answer must be in this :

"He saves the sheep, the goats He doth not save."
 So rang Tertullian's sentence, on the side
 Of that unpitying Phrygian sect which cried :
 "Him can no fount of fresh forgiveness lave,
 "Who sins, once wash'd by the baptismal
 wave."—

So spake the fierce Tertullian. But she sigh'd,
The infant Church ! of love she felt the tide
Stream on her from her Lord's yet recent grave.

And then she smiled ; and in the Catacombs,
With eyes suffused but heart inspired true,
On those walls subterranean, where she hid

Her head 'mid ignominy, death, and tombs,
She her Good Shepherd's hasty image drew —
And on his shoulders, not a lamb, a kid.

There is no duo-verse or multi-verse in his eye, as Arnold discerns the presence of God. This is a universe because God is all and in all. This exposition may not be quite satisfactory to metaphysical theology, but it fixes the thought: "The Kingdom of God is within you," and it provides a mighty leverage for that conduct where faith in God must live. Perhaps it is more Greek than Hebrew, and it may turn out to be one of the richest of Greek contributions completing the sphere of Christian thinking as it appeared when Paul, that "Hebrew of Hebrews" quoted from the Greek poet, "For in Him we live and move and have our being" or when the Greek Christian fathers, Origen and Clement spake. It is a faith which

surely does not forbid us trusting and obeying the Personal God, though He be no anthropomorphic being such as Arnold had too often troubled himself about, in his "God and the Bible."

It is this large faith in God which makes such minds stand with awe and prayer in the presence of other religions. "God hath not left Himself without a witness"—they are finding this everywhere.

"Children of men ! the unseen Power, whose eye
Forever doth accompany mankind,
Hath look'd on no religion scornfully
That men did find.

"Which has not taught weak wills how much
they can ?
Which has not fall'n on the dry heart like rain ?
Which has not cried to sunk, self-weary man :
Thou must be born again !

"Children of men ! not that your age excel
In pride of life the ages of your sires,
But that ye think clear, feel deep, bear fruit well,
The Friend of man desires."

Such culture as comprehends a sympathetic insight into all religions, from

this point of view, throughout the prose and poetry of Matthew Arnold, has made an appeal entirely Christian to both minstrels and ministers. Yet Arnold's experience as a thinker on religion and as a teacher of morals—most evidently as a builder of character—makes us pause here, to take our soundings, before we go further in adopting his reckonings and a course. We have left our old world with a certain churchly and narrow conception of God's self-revelation in one religion, namely, in Christianity. And where we now are, Matthew Arnold must tell us in familiar lines. The true minister will find many a sincere man saying even yet :

“Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest my head,
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.
Their faith, my tears, the world deride —
I come to shed them at their side.”

That path of tears was only an intellectual retreat, and it was but half discovered springing from tired feet towards darkness, when Arnold began to protest.

Here let the minister take full account of

himself before he flees where no minstrel, however ascetic and austere, may get rid of his brain, his heart and his will. Wherever a man is, with Obermann or the monks at Grande Chartreuse, he will have himself on his hands and "he is incurably religious." No scepticism of Francis W. Newman, no monasticism of John Henry, his brother, has been sufficiently capacious for "the soul and its aspirations" or a mind whose "*Apologia Pro Vita Sua*" is valuable only as a warning. Yet our minstrel stands painfully concerned with man's spiritual distress looking first one way to the haunt of Obermann and then the other way to ascetic placidity at Grande Chartreuse. It will be a long time before men will leave off looking from Rationalism to Romanism. Arnold's unhasting strength, his love for the healing in nature of which none have found more of the leaves, his fearless inward looking, his haunting fear that he may miss the unrealized as a stimulating dream, his soul's welcome to the pain of progress—these will not harmonize with incessant doubting, nor will they be sequestered from mankind. He may be

baffled; he may have to learn that in many men's crises "their strength is to sit still"; he may be so long learning it that he shall grow tired and fall upon the breast of God, as a child not meaning to go to sleep just there, but nevertheless finds rest on the mother's breast "found in darkness as in light"—still he must wake, and then he will again sing:

"Achilles ponders in his tent,
The kings of modern thought are dumb;
Silent they are, though not content,
And wait to see the future come.
They have the grief men had of yore,
But they contend and cry no more.

"Our fathers water'd with their tears
This sea of time whereon we sail,
Their voices were in all men's ears
Who pass'd within their puissant hail.
Still the same ocean round us raves,
But we stand mute, and watch the waves."

There is a pathos in his cry which no other age than our own could have stimulated, and the minister who does not apprehend this will not reach the heart of our great spiritual needs. More than Tennyson or Browning does Matthew

Arnold illustrate this. Our age turns this way and that in its search for conclusions, largely from the force of habit. Trying has proven so conquering in our day. It has found so much in unsuspected quarters to fill its purse; it has worked over the dump of its ancient but forsaken mines, and lo, new methods and processes have amazingly enriched us and the dump has been made more precious than the original diggings; it has entertained lofty aims and left them for unnamed achievements; its fear to fail at what it ever set forth to find or to do has issued in finding or doing something more grand than any dream; its yearnings have been too intense, crude, and hasty to live through the mist of dreamy paganism to which they have appealed from a Christianity partial enough to generate them and too fragmentary to train and to crown them—all these colours and tones the soul's cry has caught from the age. Matthew Arnold has uttered it. He cannot quite give up his old world. He will not yield essential Christianity even in his revolt against what passes as the authorized statement. From the inadequate dogmatism which

he too often seems to confound with Christianity itself, he hastens to a rationalism often Christian in its vocabulary and as often pagan in its account of the soul and its precious furnishings. Then back again he leads us, all the while deepening the necessity within us for a faith which is not quite his own. This begets an almost diseased self-consciousness or a shadowy self. Thus, even at best, he is projecting himself upon nature and history. This is illustrated more in his experiences with nature. He almost blasts nature with the hot breath with which he loves her. The urgent shadow of himself gets ahead of him. And yet when he is free from this shadowy self in front of him, there is no more inspired revealer of nature's secret beauty and meaning. He sings by the seaside :

“The sea is calm to-night.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits ;—on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone ; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air !
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,

Listen ! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Ægean, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery ; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world. "

But now, what else has Arnold heard
and seen, save himself? It is not Dover
Beach, but Matthew Arnold. If this
strain of music, so often prolonged,
wearies, it is because the human soul
never gives continuous sympathy to the
scepticism which infects the heart's blood.

"Tell me not of your doubts," our age of questioning and achievement says with Goethe, "I have doubts enough of my own." Arnold has taught us that our doubts have been so honest and personal that they have made one feared assumption impossible. When one begins to fear the issue of his doubts, he makes one see the impossibility of dark atheism. He is on his way to deeper faith, and his negatives imply positives; yet he can never add enough minuses together to produce a plus. Artistic to the last degree, he instinctively turns from this bad art. Perhaps no one poem so fully sets forth these apparently antagonistic tendencies and his keen impatience as "Empedocles."

It is here that we discover fine spiritual qualities, or the want of them, accounting for his incomplete statement of what Christianity is, in its facts, hopes and motive power. And we must think that he who wrote so well on "the secret of Jesus," who has rescued our Bible for many of us by that larger faith of his which masqueraded in the doubts of "Literature and Dogma,"—that he who

has taught us the way to so many streams of moral power, ought not to have been so serious with dull-eyed British Christianity, in fact or form, and that assuredly he might have found for us the fountain itself. Even so, the Christianity of Arnold is not that of the Bible which he has lifted out of malarious mists of dogma. The following lines furnish a brilliantly stated truth with strange lapses towards error ; his silences are as misleading as his dogmatic accounts of the facts. He is telling us of the effect of early Christianity on the world to which it came :

“ On that hard Pagan world disgust
And secret loathing fell.
Deep weariness and sated lust
Made human life a hell.

“ In his cool hall, with haggard eyes,
The Roman noble lay ;
He drove abroad, in furious guise,
Along the Appian way.

“ He made a feast, drank fierce and fast,
And crown'd his hair with flowers —
No easier nor no quicker pass'd
The impracticable hours.

“The brooding East with awe beheld
Her impious younger world.
The Roman tempest swell'd and swell'd,
And on her head was hurl'd.

“The East bow'd low before the blast
In patient, deep disdain ;
She let the legions thunder past,
And plunged in thought again.)

“So well she mused, a morning broke
Across her spirit gray ;
A conquering, new-born joy awoke,
And fill'd her life with day.

“‘Poor world,’ she cried, ‘so deep accurst,
That runn’st from pole to pole
To seek a draught to slake thy thirst —
Go, seek it in thy soul!’ ”

His account is a page of nobly written history, and we see the West veiling her eagles, snapping her sword, abhorring her purple and the imperial crown. The flutes are stopped with brutal sports, her palaces are vacant because lust of eye and pride of life are left behind.

“Mid weeds and wrecks she stood—a place
Of ruin—but she smiled ! ”

His Obermann is Arnold, and he smiles
while he says to his heart :

“No lonely life had pass'd too slow,
When I could hourly scan
Upon his Cross, with head sunk low,
That nail'd, thorn-crowned Man !

“Could see the Mother with her Child
Whose tender winning arts
Have to his little arms beguiled
So many wounded hearts !

“And centuries came and ran their course,
And unspent all that time
Still, still went forth that Child's dear force,
And still was at its prime.

“Ay, ages long endured his span
Of life—'tis true received —
That gracious Child, that thorn-crown'd
Man !
—He lived while we believed.

“While we believed, on earth he went,
And open stood his grave.
Men call'd from chamber, church and tent ;
And Christ was by to save.”

This is looking backward. Why will
we look ever backward or forward, when
we should look inward ?

This is a merely historical Christ—and such can never save a living man. Too soon such a Christ vanishes. The New Testament is never true for long as an historical document unless it is true as a record of present experience.

“Now he is dead ! Far hence he lies
In the lorn Syrian town ;
And on his grave, with shining eyes,
The Syrian stars look down.

“In vain men still, with hoping new,
Regard his death-place dumb,
And say the stone is not yet to,
And wait for words to come.”

Surely, he can only look into the future —“wandering between two worlds—one dead.” Then he looks for another dream and its own mystic literature. This is not the Christian’s position at all. His Christ ever liveth within. Christ within authenticates the historic Christ. Man was taught by Christ to expect it. The spirit beareth witness and will show Christ’s words to a man. Without the indwelling Christ, he may only write and speculate. And this will ever be the pathetic record of it :

“A fever in these pages burns
Beneath the calm they feign ;
A wounded spirit turns,
Here, on its bed of pain.

“Yes, though the virgin mountain-air
Fresh through these pages blows ;
Though to these leaves the glaciers spare
The soul of their white snows ;

“Though here a mountain-murmur swells
Of many a dark-bough'd pine ;
Though, as you read, you hear the bells
Of the high-pasturing kine —

“Yet, through the hum of torrent lone,
And brooding mountain-bee,
There sobs I know not what ground-tone
Of human agony.”

Of all lessons which Matthew Arnold's spiritual career has to teach through his poetry, probably the most characteristic and hence autobiographical, is this—Stoicism fails to-day with any true soul just as it failed and for the same reasons that it failed on that far off yesterday. Arnold sought to turn from the fever and fret which the author of *Obermann* only quickened, and his cry was for calm. Let

us analyze it. Taking the age into his consciousness, that there may be one open secret to state, he says truly :

“Too fast we live, too much are tried,
Too harass’d to attain
Wordsworth’s sweet calm, or Goethe’s wide
And luminous view to gain.”

Now, why do we live so fast? Surely modern man ought not to be driven by the multitude of his own time-savers or frightened by a world which has shrunk in physical proportions only at the command of his own inventions. The genius which has achieved has been so educated in and through its own achieving that it ought not to be conquered by its great achievements. Even such culture must mean poise and mastery, above all, self-mastery. Of course, every step leads to a vision of much beyond ; and yet modern man, other things being equal, should have obtained some sense of the calm universal and the unfretting eternal. This, however, is just what modern man has not acquired. Why? Why are we in such haste? There is

only one answer—We do not believe deeply, loftily, grandly. Here comes back an old word which unhappily escaped the absorbing and assimilating thought of Arnold, but it is as true as the Greek vision of beauty and as valuable as the Greek contribution to religious philosophy: "*He that believeth shall not make haste.*" Goethe's "unhasting—unresting" was born of the serenity and eagerness of faith. All sobriety of mind where the realities of life are in full view, all calm at the centre of the storm as coolness in the heart of the flame, all self-restraint amidst noisy anarchy, all cloudless vision while clouds smite below as "ignorant armies clash by night"—these are cradled and nurtured by faith. Faith has the sense of the universal and says with Emerson, to voluble haste: "Why so hot, my little sir?" Faith knows the mighty presences; and, trusting them, faith enters and encamps within their silences. Faith has the sense of the eternal and dwells there. It has taken all its chastened care and feverish anxiety where time is no more. It knows the place and room, the time and leisure of

the Father of Eternity whose home is the Infinite. Faith does not make haste. "My Father worketh hitherto and I work"—this is its untroubled mood. "The Eternal Not Ourselves that Makes for Righteousness"—if God be nothing more—He is *eternally* for righteousness. Faith lives in the consciousness that there is much done, much doing, and much yet to do which God has done, is doing, and will do ; and it escapes all stoical indifference, through working as cheerfully and hopefully, because of the character and method of God. The contrast between the Stoicism of Arnold and the Christian vision and temper is as great as that between the latter and Swinburne's Epicureanism. The minister of to-day must be familiar with the fretful cry of Arnold and all that it signifies as to the effect of Stoicism in its ending in petulance with unrest, and he must know the pain and want hiding beneath the flaccid luxuriousness of Epicureanism—for Stoicism and Epicureanism even yet confront the preacher as they did in Paul's day and for the same reasons. Here are two ancient and apparently deathless foes to

manly faith ; and they are to be understood by the minister, as the minstrels portray them, if he is to find out men's sorrows and meet them with a divine medication.

Not in Greece had Epicureanism the advantage of songful championship more magnificent or forceful than in Swinburne ; not in Greece had Stoicism the gift of musical speech more philosophic or clear than in Arnold. His appeal is clothed with the robes of both day and night. Now it dims the sun ; now it startles the stars :

“ Ah, once more,” I cried, “ ye stars, ye waters,
On my heart your mighty charm renew ;
Still, still let me, as I gaze upon you,
Feel my soul becoming vast like you ! ”

From the intense, clear, star-sown vault of
heaven,
Over the lit sea's unquiet way,
In the rustling night air came the answer :
“ Wouldst thou be as these are ? Live as they.

“ Unaffrighted by the silence round them,
Undistracted by the sights they see,
These demand not that the things without them
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.

“ And with joy the stars perform their shining,
And the sea its long moon-silver'd roll ;
For self-poised they live, nor pine with noting
All the fever of some differing soul.

“ Bounded by themselves, and unregardful
In what state God's other works may be,
In their own tasks all their powers pouring,
These attain the mighty life you see.”

Two things are evident in all this harmony which rises out of discord ; first, Arnold is so personally truthful, that is, he so sincerely gets into the core of his essential being in and through this expressed longing, that he betrays man's thirst for the Infinite.

“ Still let me as I gaze upon you,
Feel my soul *becoming vast like you.*”

Deep calleth to deep. Man is made for communion with God. Father and child must live each in the other, or their natures fail and lapse. As we shall see later, his poems find their deeper music only as human life deepens and widens into the Divine. Matthew Arnold never could make a melodious rhyme in sight

of the suspicion that man ever could yearn away from vastness towards pettiness. The escape for the finite is not away from, but into the Infinite. But this, he believes, is the way to calm. It is interesting to see that Arnold does not attempt to obtain this much desired calm by turning to the noisy race of men to reform them and get them to be quiet. He would look to nature, and away from man. He has, however, expressed an implied faith that, after all, calm is to come from above and from God. O let us believe à little more, Mr. Arnold!—and we will not make haste! Again he sings:

“Calm soul of all things! make it mine
To feel, amid the city’s jar,
That there abides a peace of thine,
Man did not make, and cannot mar.

The will to neither strive nor cry,
The power to feel with others give!
Calm, calm me more! nor let me die
Before I have begun to live.”

Now, that is a good and well reasoned prayer. God alone can answer it. It brings the problem before God and His

unwearied calm. He at least has never been hasty or fevered, and thus gotten things into a turmoil, because He has never been untrue to Himself—"Calm soul of all things." The tranquillity of God then comes in sight as the only reality to which our appeal may be made. There is a peace—"a peace of thine man did not make and cannot mar." To perceive this is to begin the reconstruction of a ruined world. The universe is right side up; the restful sky is over the restless earth, when we pray thus. But what if this "will to neither strive nor cry"—bringing to our memory One who did not strive or cry nor was His voice heard in the streets—is attained only by yielding to Him whose will becomes our law through our love of Him? How near we are come to God in Christ who says: "Peace I leave with you: My peace I give unto you."

This brings us to the second thing of importance: there is a fallacy in this reasoning, even though it be melodious and surcharged with a noble longing for the Infinite. It is quite inspiring to gaze on the stars and accurately accord with

their quiet movement; but we cannot suit man's cry to their calm with any logical anticipation, even if he shall imitate them, without comprehending man's restlessness and finding out that the cause of his disquietude and fret is somehow related either by likeness or unlikeness to the cause of their placidity and poise. And here the truth which Matthew Arnold's earlier poetry left too often unsung, emerges from the soul in all its undeniable force. The soul confesses: "I have had experiences which the stars never had and never can have; 'self-poised they are' but I have lost my self-poise; I was created with the awful gift of freedom and responsibility; I could say *no* to the 'Calm soul of all things,' and I have done it; I have sinned and I am as sure of it as that I yet 'yearn to the greatness of nature,' as Mr. Arnold advises me, and desire to 'rally the good in the depths of myself' as he also exhorts me to do."

This is a brief page from every true soul's autobiography. The sight of the stars made the moral law within, not less, but more dreadfully apparent to so great a man as Kant. All sound philosophy so

regards this phenomenon of the soul. That moral law is founded in the fact that man is God's child and God is man's Father. This reality of man's sonship unto God quickens and broadens into the brotherhood of humanity under the Fatherhood of God. The stars? They may be "unregardful in what state God's other works may be"; but man cannot. As he reaches calm, he is more sympathetic. To ask less of man is to misconceive him, and to obtain less would unman him. "Wouldst thou be as these are? Live as they"—but once having lost self-poise, we cannot *be* as the stars, and so we cannot *live as they* live. But let the truth be told, and it is this: at our best, we do not expect, cannot desire to be only as they are. Man is so created that he must be more. No star's possibilities touch a segment of the weakest man's orbit. He is so hereditarily related to the "calm soul of all things" that he must be in communion and fellowship with it or Him. This is his life.

Now, leaving for a moment these considerations as to the manner in which Arnold's Greek Stoicism striving with an

Hebraic religiousness breaks down in the presence of the human soul and its experiences, which are the stuff and impulse of all poetry and piety, we must note that Matthew Arnold himself has too much youth and promise of soul to abide long in his starlit dream of calm. One virile and eager life makes sad work of an inadequate spiritual hostelry like this. Here is the working of that noble discontent which cries for a better day and sings at stormy crises, with Wordsworth :

“Bliss it were to be alive
And to be young was heaven.”

Arnold was too sound an educator to remand youth to such a fate as would deny the highest value to youth's divinely bred agitations. And so he sang a song true to human nature ; and it has a bugle call, even if, at the conclusion, it is somewhat muffled by the stoic who too often gets control of the musician in him :

“ 'Tis death ! and peace, indeed, is here,
And ease from shame and rest from fear ;
There's nothing can disarm now
The smoothness of that limpid brow.

But is a calm like this, in truth,
The crowning end of life and youth,
And when this boon rewards the dead,
Are all debts paid, has all been said?
Ah no, the bliss youth dreams is one
For daylight, for the cheerful sun,
For feeling nerves and living breath —
Youth dreams a bliss on this side death.
It dreams a rest, if not more deep,
More grateful than this marble sleep;
It hears a voice within it tell:

Calm's not life's crown, though calm is well.

'Tis all perhaps which man acquires,
But 'tis not what our youth desires."

We are relieved of one of the weights of our own scepticism, and a certain shadow lifts from the path of heroic living, which always involves service and self-sacrifice, when so clear-headed and true-hearted a man as Matthew Arnold breaks his own cherished equation of life and tells us that "calm is not life's crown." We all know that "calm is well." Such an admission as this by Arnold, in the presence of the facts we have reached and known by living truly and loftily, is most important. But Arnold has made additional admissions which are even more

valuable, since they come from one so thoroughgoing, scholarly and sincere.

He has aforetime urged the man in an arid state of spiritual existence to

“Yearn to the greatness of nature ;
Rally the good in the depths of thyself.”

Most of us have long ago thrown off the incubus of that distrust of nature and ourselves consequent upon any belief in the total depravity of animate and inanimate things. We have wished both to yearn and to rally ; and, in the confidence that each was a good thing to attempt, we have done our best. Alone we have failed. First, we have found nature to be what nature is to Matthew Arnold. Nature has been very little productive of that calm which is “their joy” who trust her. Mind has dominated matter. We have troubled the mirror as Arnold himself reads himself into nature ; and each man says :

“Well I know what they feel !
They gaze, and the evening wind
Plays on their faces ; they gaze—
Airs from the Eden of youth
Awake and stir in their soul ;
The past returns—they feel

What they are, alas ! what they were.
They, not nature, are changed.
Well I know what they feel !

“ Hush, for tears
Begin to steal to their eyes !
Hush, for fruit
Grows from such sorrow as theirs !
Thou, O Nature, wast mute,
Mute as of old ! ”

Mr. Arnold is too sincere to hide the truth that man is more than nature and that he cannot wisely “ yearn ” to something less than himself. He says to us :

“ Know, man hath all which Nature hath, but
more,
And in that *more* lie all his hopes of good.
Nature is cruel, man is sick of blood ;
Nature is stubborn, man would fain adore ;

“ Nature is fickle, man hath need of rest ;
Nature forgives no debt, and fears no grave ;
Man would be mild, and with safe conscience
blest.

“ Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends ;
Nature and man can never be fast friends.
Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her slave ! ”

So, as instructed, we will yearn to some-

thing more than nature. How swiftly Matthew Arnold's failure to stop anywhere this side the fact, is leading us to the Divine Incarnation ! Man can yearn to God alone. And as he finds God in humanity, he must yearn upward and personally towards personality.

And now comes another confessed failure. His exhortation is this : " Rally the good in the depths of thyself ! " This means energy, moral motive power, the ethical dynamic. But I have sinned ; I have no will to rally ; I need a captain—and if I have any good in the depths of myself, Love only can reach it, and Love must be my captain. And the fact is—and Arnold sings of the serious condition ; indeed, no other minstrel so reinforces the minister at this critical point—I cannot extemporize the ethical dynamic with any more success in the attempt than I can get power from obeying his apparently judicious words :

" Resolve to be thyself : and know that he
Who finds himself loses his misery."

Ah ! it is myself that confronts me with shame. To find myself and to do that

only does not mean that I shall even try to lift myself by my own boot straps—a thing impossible. What can be done? Mr. Arnold again advertises nature. But here he invests nature with an intelligence and ethical judicature which is in man alone. He has caught the way of the vanishing band of materialistic scientists. They once denied God's presence and His sovereignty. Something had to take the vacant position in thinking. The atom and law came into use, and then our teachers poured all divine potencies into the atom, in order to get the physical universe to go. We are weary of scientifically worded phantoms, but we listen to this :

“Then when the clouds are off the soul,
When thou dost bask in Nature's eye,
Ask, how *she* view'd thy self-control,
Thy struggling, task'd morality —
Nature, whose free, light, cheerful air,
Oft made thee, in thy gloom, despair.”

What a mythical thing is this nature? It is hard for Matthew Arnold to kick against the goads; but he will do it, as did Saul of Tarsus. Nevertheless, both

Saul and Arnold are too sincere to be left in the darkness or the twilight. He must lodge his faith somewhere. So he sings again of nature, as a child with pardonable anthropomorphism. Tell me, whether it be worse and more unphilosophical to give God the features of a man and pray to Him or to give nature the faculties of God and talk to her.

“And she, whose censure thou dost dread,
Whose eye thou wast afraid to seek,
See, on her face a glow is spread,
A strong emotion on her cheek !
“Ah, child !” she cries, “that strife divine,
Whence was it, for it is not mine ?

“There is no effort on my brow —
I do not strive, I do not weep ;
I rush with the swift spheres and glow
In joy, and when I will, I sleep.
Yet that severe, that earnest air,
I saw, I felt it once—but where ?

“I knew not yet the gauge of time,
Nor wore the manacles of space ;
I felt it in some other clime,
I saw it in some other place.
’Twas when the heavenly house I trod,
And lay upon the breast of God.”

Let us notice here that this effort to obtain a moral motive-power in nature has compelled Matthew Arnold to invest nature with a history which is at least as much an assertion of *preëxistence* as we would make concerning Jesus Christ; and that, as yet, nature gives no calm to us in the Garden of Gethsemane such as did He who spoke out of the heart of sin's tragedy, saying: "My peace I give unto you." If preëxistence of moral basis and ethical dynamic is superstitious in the case of Jesus Christ, it is in the case of nature still more so. More reasonable is it to believe in the moral right to command in a Son of God—a man who came straight from the heavenly house—in Jesus Himself—than in insensate though sublime and beautiful nature. Always, when scepticism has to believe at all, her credulity is excessive, if not ludicrous.

Mr. Arnold himself has forced us even farther towards what we have called the *probability* that Jesus Christ alone furnishes the moral dynamic demanded by such natures as Matthew Arnold himself. He says truly:

"We cannot kindle when we will
 The fire which in the heart resides ;
 The spirit bloweth and is still,
 In mystery our soul abides.
 But tasks in hours of insight will'd
 Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd."

What then can kindle the human personality? Nothing but the personality of Love. Light of truth will not kindle; only warmth of Love can kindle and this, I repeat, must be personal. Let us be done with "*what*" for a soul; let us ask "*who*" can deliver me from the body of this death? "*Who* can forgive sin?" and "*Who* is life?" "*Who* is God?" The answer is: "I that speak unto you am He." But that answer is upon the lips of Jesus Christ.

Why should we any longer detain the unveiling of the picture Christianity offers? Here are certain facts and among them is this: after serious study of Matthew Arnold's poetry, we must appeal to man as God's recipient of His self-revelation—not to nature. Nature never "lay on the breast of God" and nature never "trod the heavenly house," as has man whose "shadowy recollec-

tions" attest his essential childhood unto his Father in heaven. Man is, at least, the highest point in nature. Upon him breaks the all-revealing light of God. And here is Arnold's most important confession and the light of his faith is so hardly won that it is full of heroic flame. It involves this, at least, that good and true humanity is the best manifestation of God. That is the core of the fact of God incarnated in humanity as the only adequate moral motive power. Let us note the corroborative evidence in his own best poetry, which is, of course, the expression of his noblest religious feeling. He is telling us of his father at Rugby Chapel. We may well be reverent here, for no more genetic soul ever touched the future of England than Thomas Arnold. Sing ever so admiringly, O childhood,—sing of thy father, for admiration, hope, and love, as Wordsworth has told us, are what we live by, and God is ever coming again in redeemed humanity! We shall see the Fatherhood of God, when we know the Brotherhood of man. But what a kinship is this which indites the ode:—

“O Strong soul, by what shore
Tarriest thou now? For that force,
Surely, has not been left vain!
Somewhere, surely, afar,
In the sounding labour-house vast
Of being, is practiced that strength,
Zealous, beneficent, firm!

“Yes, in some far-shining sphere,
Conscious or not of the past,
Still thou performest the word
Of the Spirit in whom thou dost live—
Prompt, unwearied, as here!
Still thou upraisest with zeal
The humble good from the ground,
Sternly represses the bad!
Still, like a trumpet, dost rouse
Those who with half-open eyes
Tread the border-land dim
'Twixt vice and virtue; reviv'st,
Succourest!—this was thy work,
This was thy life upon earth.

“What is the course of the life
Of mortal men on the earth? —
Most men eddy about
Here and there—eat and drink,
Chatter and love and hate,
Gather and squander, are raised
Aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,
Striving blindly, achieving

Nothing ; and then they die —
Perish ;—and no one asks
Who or what they have been,
More than he asks what waves,
In the moonlit solitudes mild
Of the midmost Ocean, have swell'd,
Foam'd for a moment, and gone."

What a basis for belief in the Incarnation is such a living faith in such a God-inspired man ! The filial minstrel acknowledges this :

" And *through thee I believe*
In the noble and great who are gone ;
Pure souls honour'd and blest
By former ages, who else —
Such, so soulless, so poor,
Is the race of men whom I see —
Seem'd but a dream of the heart,
Seem'd but a cry of desire.
Yes ! I believe that there lived
Others like thee in the past,
Not like the men of the crowd
Who all round me to-day
Bluster or cringe, and make life
Hideous, and arid, and vile ;
But souls temper'd with fire,
Fervent, heroic, and good,
Helpers and friends of mankind.

"Servants of God!—or sons
Shall I not call you? because
Not as servants ye knew
Your Father's innermost mind,
His, who unwillingly sees
One of His little ones lost —
Yours is the praise, if mankind
Hath not as yet in its march
Fainted, and fallen, and died!"

If then God has so manifested Himself in a teacher, friend and father, that this revelation of Himself constitutes a fresh and permanent ethical energy, shall we not rise above nature so heartless and so unwilling, to that faith in the future which, not nature but man under God alone may promise and secure? Pessimism, which always haunts the verges of Arnold's philosophy of life, yields then to a Meliorism prophetic of an Optimism, when he draws near to the fact that God has revealed Himself and will continue to reveal Himself in humanity :

"See! In the rocks of the world
Marches the host of mankind,
A feeble, wavering line.
Where are they tending?—A God

Marshall'd them, gave them their goal.
Ah, but the way is so long !
Years they have been in the wild !
Sore thirst plagues them, the rocks,
Rising all round, overawe ;
Factions divide them, their host
Threatens to break, to dissolve.
—Ah, keep, keep them combined !
Else, of the myriads who fill
That army, not one shall arrive ;
Sole they shall stray ; in the rocks
Stagger forever in vain,
Die one by one in the waste.

“Then, in such hour of need
Of your fainting, dispirited race,
Ye, like angels, appear,
Radiant with ardour divine !
Beacons of hope, ye appear !
Languor is not in your heart,
Weakness is not in your word,
Weariness not on your brow.
Ye alight in our van ! at your voice,
Panic, despair, flee away.
Ye move through the ranks, recall
The stragglers, refresh the outworn,
Praise, reinspire the brave !
Order, courage, return.
Eyes rekindling, and prayers
Follow your steps as ye go.
Ye fill up the gaps in our files,

Strengthen the wavering line,
Stablish, continue our march,
On, to the bound of the waste,
On, to the City of God."

But any true City of God is possible only in the coöperation of the Sons of God, and Jesus Christ has revealed that Sonship. This is the practical aspect of the truth of the Incarnation.

Of course, now that men are beset with faults which becloud the mind, and so many of us are not clear in vision, we must not rest here, in an argument, the validity of Christ's appeal to us as an authoritative ruler of our lives, our Saviour and our guide,—we cannot rest it in anything less than *life* itself, and, as Arnold tells us, "conduct is three-fourths of life." So, then, we accept the command of our poet, not different from that involved in the older words: "He that willeth to do the will of my Father shall know of the doctrine." Here is his statement of our duty, and it is the better part of our conduct:

"Long fed on boundless hopes, O race of man,
How angrily thou spurn'st all simpler fare !

‘Christ,’ some one says, ‘was human as we
are;

No judge eyes us from Heaven, our sin to scan;

“‘We live no more, when we have done our
span.’—

‘Well, then, for Christ,’ thou answerest, ‘who
can care?

From sin, which Heaven records not, why
forbear?

Live we like brutes our life without a plan!’

“So answerest thou; but why not rather say:

‘Hath man no second life?—Pitch this one
high!

Sits there no judge in Heaven, our sin to
see? —

More strictly, then, the inward judge obey!

Was Christ a man like us? *Ah! let us try*

If we then, too, can be such men as he!’”

Jesus Christ is the way of God to us
and He is the way of us to God. Man
will always have an interest in the poetry
which will not hide his higher necessities.
Its compliment to the nobility of his
nature will not come in vain. Its implied
eulogium of his possibilities will make it
dear. Matthew Arnold, as has been seen,
honours the thirst in the finite for the In-

finite. To him man's true way out of himself lies towards the Infinite. Time's river is always drawn thither to eternity :

" Haply the river of Time —

As it grows, as the towns on its marge

Fling their wavering lights

On a wider, statelier stream —

May acquire, if not the calm

Of its early mountainous shore,

Yet ■ solemn peace of its own.

" And the width of the waters, the hush

Of the gray expanse where he floats,

Freshening its current and spotted with foam

As it draws to the Ocean, may strike

Peace to the soul of the man on its breast —

As the pale waste widens around him,

As the banks fade dimmer away,

As the stars come out, and the night-wind

Brings up the stream

Murmurs and scents of the infinite sea."

Here is eternity. Where shall one find it real, save in Christ who alone may say : " I and the Father are one." Matthew Arnold's own career of mingled faith and doubt was finely described in the following lines, in which let us note how again he gets out into the infinite. It is man's only true sea and shore.

“But the majestic river floated on,
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,
Rejoicing, through the hush’d Chorasmian waste,
Under the solitary moon ;—he flow’d
Right for the polar star, past Orgunje,
Brimming, and bright, and large; then sands
begin

To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,
And split his currents ; that for many a league
The shorn and parcell’d Oxus strains along
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles —
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had
In his high mountain-cradle in Pamere,
A foil’d circuitous wanderer—till at last
The long’d-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
His luminous home of waters opens, bright
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed
stars

Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.”

Here is the same goal. “The luminous home of waters”—and the “murmurs and scents of the infinite sea” are of mighty interest to a “foiled circuitous wanderer” who has toiled with the sands that hem the march and split the currents of a baffled faith. He may disappoint you and me at this point or that, but one has only to possess Matthew Arnold’s

patience, honour of mind and a true heart, with ever so little of his culture and intellectual acumen, to find a throne-room in his own thinking, which, if it ever be occupied, must be occupied by Jesus Christ alone.

LECTURE III

ALFRED TENNYSON

THE failure of Matthew Arnold's Greek solution for the human problem only emphasizes the facts with which any gospel must grapple, if it prove an eváγγελ either to the poet or the preacher. It is a fact of fundamental importance that, moving now with a quickened desire for some solution for life's darkest problems out of which we have made vain appeal to Matthew Arnold's classical stoicism, we are not in the least removed from the material out of which the most important experiences of the soul have come and must ever come. Approaching the circle where the light seen and known by Tennyson falls upon everything, we have with us yet the incontestable facts of man missing his mark, of his suffering voluntary defect as a result of what we must call sin, and the desire to be free not only from the consequence, but also the disorder or malady which is the cause of these

bitter results. They act and react in our experience, even yet. Any difference of cadence, of rhythmic fervour and richness of elaboration in phrase, accomplishes nothing except to attest the unchanging significance of the old facts. It is a testimony which ought to be regarded by the minister, that the finer minstrel, just as he more truly reaches into depths and heights of pure poetry, grasps more surely a theological conviction and has more certainly become intimate with the authoritative facts of religion. We must preach up and down to the realities of the soul and its experience—realities which the poets illumine till they stand out like Sinai and Calvary. Many a man suitably ordained who wishes to be a real preacher misses it by the fact that, with a religious atmosphere which is quickeningly poetic, he fails to deal in a broad and deep and high manner with the facts of soul-life which long ago germinated and are demanding fair treatment in his hands and at this time. He does not know and estimate these ancient and yet modern facts as seriously as the poets have known and estimated them. A world was once

educated by Dante and Shakespeare to have and honour, or to be had and honoured, by a conscience, so long as the minstrel was around ; and this ethically educated world did not desire to be free from that august conscience or to hear its less imperious commands when the minister came. Latterly, this conscience has been singularly illumined and its forces trained by such men as we are studying in these lectures. They are the true minstrels of the soul. They are men who have told to the soul its own unspoken experiences. They have given the soul a moral integrity which demands much of any other kind of ministry or minstrelsy, whether the one anointed speak from a pulpit or not ; whether the one with coal of fire shall address men in prose or in verse. It is all too evident that much of the failure of the ministry of our immediate day lies in this, that the minister has had no such perception and conviction and burden with regard to conscience, for example, as has the minstrel. Only such a man as Canon Mozeley, in his sermon—"The Reversal of Human Judgment"—can compare with any of the little masters

of modern poetry, in moral tension, as to the matter of honouring and making clear to men the immeasurable distances between right and wrong. Some of the most widely heard of our preachers only preach up to a certain point on the path leading to the summit of Mount Sinai, or beyond even unto Calvary, and only there, they may safely quote Tennyson and Browning, and use the mightier words of poets to justify any expression of their own apparently strong feelings. If I were to say only one thing to those who are searching for the most needed help for the minister, which the masters of literature can give them, in order that they shall be equal to their task as preachers unto the men of to-day, it would be this: Reflect that our recent English masters have trained conscience and other spiritual powers within human nature to a keener sense of the terrible reality of wrong. You must bring your preaching up to that conviction; and your preaching must deal with it and triumph over the difficulties it presents. To do this, you would better become acquainted with the soul's territory which they describe.

You must walk with the minstrels of the soul down the deep ravines and gorges and into the wider and profounder abyss of darkness to which they lead, where sin lurks and hides ; and there, with these men of faith and vision, it must be yours to behold the seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head.

But, before we ask Alfred Tennyson to instruct us as to any of these things, let us again recognize the fact that the age with which we are to deal, whose men and women we are to instruct and guide, no longer holds to certain views of God, His nature, His providence, and His grace—views which hardened into dogmas that were satisfactory before the era of Wordsworth, Shelley, and Coleridge which we have just studied. The preacher who has no adequate vision of the Divine will not minister to the human. That the time cannot be Godless is certain, and that it will cherish and obey a vision of God ennobling in the presence of its moral self-respect and entirely comprehensive of all the concerns of being and life, is just as certain. One thing the man of faith may always count upon, that man

is travelling progressively, and that, therefore, he goes evermore towards a larger and deeper faith. His doubts are ever illustrating this—they usually involve a nobler confidence in God and man than the accepted beliefs. The all-encompassing, generating, and regulating item of man's faith is his vision of God. Here Alfred Tennyson offers to an age devoted to psychological investigation and the scientific criticism of historical documents, a philosophical insight into the relations of nature and man with God and a consequent ministry, the one as reverent as it is powerful, the other as pure as it is benign.

No one will question for a moment that Tennyson's priestly function lies largely in welcoming to the finer consciousness and aspiration of man, the Immanent God—The All In All—of whom Paul spoke at Athens, quoting a Greek poet,—God whose presence is the movement of the mighty tide of being and whose ends are those of universal love. Illy educated persons have prophesied that if the truth which is in Pantheism were ever to enter the theology of literature, all the securi-

ties and interests of the personal conscience would vanish away from both poetry and prose. Well! here and everywhere in his best verse, a vision of the Divine Sovereignty rules in which the Transcendent and Immanent God lives and creates: and, what is more, the believer in

“That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves —”

is the singer who, thus giving expression to a Wordsworthian faith in the everywhere-ness of God, turns out to be the painter of the self-imposed agony of Guinevere and the recorder, in awful chastity of phrase, of the “Vision of Sin.”

The truth is becoming plain that conscience can have no divine authority within us, if conscience be not itself a manifestation of God—God’s self-evidencing life in man. If this be a truism now, it would appear that no truism ever so proved how far and sadly we had strayed from the truth. Our ministry ought to be careful as to giving due

reverence unto the Inner Light—for Tennyson, the poet, has been educating the audience of the preacher; and almost no one in that audience has been stupid enough to miss the truth that God in man is the vitalizing energy of conscience. I admit that this idea of conscience is in harmony with the truth in the pantheistic conception of the universe. But let it be admitted at once that he only who may write the psalm of The Higher Pantheism will escape the lower where Fate is all there is of Father. With Tennyson the escape is complete; it is more than an escape, and we sing :

“The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills
and the plains —
Are not these, O soul, the Vision of Him who
reigns ?

“Is not the Vision He ? tho’ He be not that which
He seems ?
Dreams are true while they last, and do we not
live in dreams ?

“Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and
limb,
Are they not sign and symbol of thy division
from Him ?

“Dark is the world to thee : thyself art the reason why ;

For is He not all but that which has power to feel ‘I am I’ ?

“Glory about thee, without thee ; and thou fillest thy doom

Making Him broken gleams, and a stifled splendour and gloom.

“Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet —

Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

“God is law, say the wise ; O soul, and let us rejoice,

For if He thunder by law the thunder is yet His voice.

“Law is God, say some : no God at all, says the fool ;

For all we have power to see is a straight staff bent in a pool ;

“And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man cannot see ;

But if we could see and hear, this Vision—were it not He ? ”

Take this idea of the everywhere-ness of God and ask what conscience is, if this is what nature is—and much of our con-

fusion ends. We will cease appealing to conscience in one moment when we need to commend the morals of a decent dogma about God, and discarding or maligning conscience with reflections as to man's depravity in general when conscience turns away from what offends right ideas of the supreme good.

The practical conclusion that, if we obey what we see and feel of this vision, all goes well with us at the centre, called conscience, grows into a conviction which gets its own habit of ruling ; and so conscience grows with rational experience. We are upon times when no other kind of conscientiousness may be appealed to effectively. We may not all be able to agree that this is an adequate statement of the true relations of man and God :

“ Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.”

But here men will ever feel the moral significance of Jesus' remark to His dis-

ciples: "I am the Vine; ye are the branches"; and the truth coming out of Tennyson's lines and the word of the Master—a truth which makes for conduct and the deciding for the high in the presence of the low—is this: there is one goodness; at least there are not two kinds of goodness. A life-secret and impulse common to both makes communion possible. As the sap is the same in the vine and branch, and the flower and root are of one another, so God's life in man is a divine manifestation and man's true life must be generated by it and it must feed upon it. This unveils the seat of religious authority. Appeal to it and you will so strengthen it, that it will be more nearly infallible than all the popes. But you ask what becomes of the item of Personality in all this new bookkeeping and inventory of the Universe? The answer which Tennyson makes in phrase and line quotable in a ministers' conference or at a theological club, is almost multitudinous. Personality—the subjective self—not individuality which is the objective self—but *Personality in God and in man*, is rescued from Anthro-
po-

morphism on the one side and a low Pantheism on the other, by a living faith in the "*I am that I am.*" Tennyson therefore sings :

"Hallowed be Thy name—Halleluiah ! —

Infinite Ideality !

Immeasurable Reality !

Infinite Personality !

Hallowed be Thy name—Halleluiah !

We feel we are nothing—for all is Thou and in Thee ;

We feel we are something—that also has come from Thee ;

We know we are nothing—but Thou wilt help us to be.

Hallowed be Thy name—Halleluiah ! "

In the wake of this idea, Tennyson has much to gather up and to authenticate in other waves of experience or trial. Emerson may stand by the grave of his child and sing :

"The great heart answered : weepest thou ?

Worthier cause for sorrow wild

If I had not taken the child.

My servant, Death, with solving rite

Pours finite into Infinite ;

House and tenant go to ground,

Lost in God, in Godhead found."

But this is not a complete account to the head and heart of Tennyson. He sings :

“That each, who seems a separate whole,
Should move his rounds, and fusing all
The skirts of self again, should fall
Remerging in the general Soul,

“Is faith as vague as all unsweet :
Eternal form shall still divide
The eternal soul from all beside ;
And I shall know him when we meet :

“And we shall sit at endless feast,
Enjoying each the other’s good :
What vaster dream can hit the mood
Of Love on earth ? He seeks at least

“Upon the last and sharpest height,
Before the spirits fade away,
Some landing-place, to clasp and say,
‘Farewell ! We lose ourselves in light.’ ”

This is a single illustration of Tennyson’s power of movement, and the result of his vision as he soars through the clouds of sorrow and bereavement, trusting the “Immeasurable Reality, Infinite Personality.”

To record the answer which this same

poet makes, in the more eloquent, philosophical and "flesh and blood" manner, through characters of the first importance who furnish a full series of clinics for all true soul-physicians, would require me to give the whole list of Tennyson's men and women with their biographies. The manner of Tennyson's dealing with men and women, his requirements of them, his questions to them, the tasks laid upon them, the duties suggested and heroisms offered to them, and, above all, their God to love and to obey—these make the truth of Personality sure. At the highest, it bleeds as on Calvary. So also must the minister confront and guide, inspire and baptize human beings, as does the minstrel.

There is much revivalistic cant in our day which usually quiets its extemporaneous enthusiasm in painting country fences with the command: "*Get right with God.*" Now, if these arduous persons only meant so sublime a task to be imposed as their words imply, it would not offend any thoughtful man who regards religion seriously. But they mean, instead, that you and I shall get into

harmony with their very incomplete, somewhat earthly and always metaphysical notion of what God is and how God acts. The principal item in their inventory of Divine attributes is that of Righteousness. Even they will concede this. But the power of God to rule must sincerely and effectively appeal to the ruled, if it be a forceful motive to accept His governance. This they will not allow. They are surer of man's depravity than they are of his divinely implanted power to respond to God, his Father. But somehow, in every strong and true government, the consent of the governed is obtained. This is easily proved in all history. If there is nothing of appealing and convincing Right in God unto what is held as Right in the soul of man, the command to be or to become right for God's sake comes in vain. Here, too often the preacher fails, where the poet succeeds. Your parishioner stays at home to read admiringly a poem which re-erects in their place and teaches him to revere and honour the living altar-fires of Divine Righteousness in man's spiritual nature, while you and I, with a vicious notion of

total depravity in you and me, throw down these altars and put out these fires. We leave God and man with nothing of the magnetic experience which similar natures know; there is no quickening conviction that our life is God's life within us. We substitute some impossible dogma for the simple creed of love's experience; and men go away, saying to some amiable child of credulity:

“You say, but with no touch of scorn,
Sweet-hearted, you, whose light-blue eyes,
Are tender over drowning flies,
You tell me, doubt is Devil-born.

“I know not: one indeed I knew
In many a subtle question versed,
Who touch'd a jarring lyre at first,
But ever strove to make it true:

“Perplext in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out.
There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

“He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
He would not make his judgment blind,
He faced the spectres of the mind
And laid them: thus he came at length

“To find a *stronger faith* his own ;
And Power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone,

“But in the darkness and the cloud,
As over Sinai’s peaks of old,
While Israel made their gods of gold,
Altho’ the trumpet blew so loud.”

Alfred Tennyson appeals to life and experience. Arthur Hallam was, indeed, a son of knowledge. No superficial scepticism clouded his youth. He inherited the historical imagination from the author of “The History of the Middle Ages.” He felt, by instinct, that there is something worth fighting for, in this affair of the soul’s convictions. It is this “stronger faith” that alone will interest thoughtful men of the twentieth century. The age believes more, not less, than its predecessor. It fears not darkness. It has a new understanding, in physics and metaphysics, of the nature of the darkness and the light. It adores no God whose presence dwells in the light alone. It gladly welcomes the revealing of the light which comes by way of the cloud. It has been

apprehended by Love—and having been apprehended, it seeks “to apprehend,” as St. Paul suggests. Its manner towards truth is scriptural, if it is not “orthodox.” It is in the air, and the preacher must reckon with the poet’s vision and experience, with sympathetic intelligence and candour, else his pulpit will go down before the breath of a song. In the heaven of Truth, “*they shall sing*,” and we can have no confidence in the survival of any view of God, man, or nature which will not yield itself and contribute to the soul’s essential music.

Having arrived at this understanding with respect to Tennyson’s verse as with the poetry of Matthew Arnold, we may well note also that these three singers who are influencing our Christian thinking are all psalmists of that all-informing, all-enfolding God who is both Immanent and Transcendent “in whom we live and move and have our being,”—this exposes them to the charge of being pantheistic; that they are all of the deeper faith in the universal self-revelation of God, in nature, human history, and above all, in humanity at its best and highest,—this exposes them

to the charge that, denying any exclusiveness of Divine culture as given to the Hebrew nation, for example, they destroy the value of the Bible; that they all entertain reverently and gratefully what is called "the larger hope" which, while it has fine poetic statement in Matthew Arnold's sonnet where again we see the Good Shepherd of the catacombs returning, bearing on his shoulders "not a lamb but kid" and a continuous proclamation in Browning's verse, has had its completest utterance in Tennyson's well-known lines :

"Oh, yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood ;

"That nothing walks with aimless feet ;
That no one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete ;

"That not a worm is cloven in vain ;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivel'd in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.

“Behold, we know not anything ;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

“So runs my dream : but what am I ?
An infant crying in the night :
An infant crying for the light :
And with no language but a cry.”

This, of course, has disquieted the maintainers of certain time-honoured positions, because, as they opine, it removes a certain hitherto useful moral leverage from beneath a world which must be lifted into light and holiness. It shall not seem too far from the present purpose to remark that the above-mentioned world is a world of human personalities ; and personalities have to be personally lifted. They cannot be lifted mechanically by urgency from beneath, but, rather, must be wooed and won from above ; they must be exalted morally by an attractive power to which they freely respond by “admiration, thought, and love.” No government as touching both father and child, can ignore the fact that, partaking each of the other’s nature, there must be a con-

sent upon the part of the governed—such a consent, indeed, upon the part of the child as develops and crowns the qualities of justice and reason, and the contemplation of noble ends which makes the child most like the father. Surely the traditional view of everlasting and hopeless suffering must pay a heavy bill charged up by everything in the human which man is asked or commanded to worship as Divine.

It is just at this point—and it is even now a most critical one in our thinking on matters religious—that Tennyson meets the perplexed and true-hearted man, and, as I believe, has to give him a tonic for his faith such as no one else may supply. Let us use a homely figure of speech. While we see both Tennyson and Browning bringing succour to the endangered or sinking craft of faith, the rope which Tennyson holds so firmly as he breasts white breakers, carrying its rescue and assurance to those in a foundering ship, is wrought of the same convictions, ideas, and hopes as that which Browning grasps and holds with stronger hand. Browning's rope is much larger, let us confess

but, when we are distressed in night and fog by a grinding reef near shore, Tennyson's rope is surer to reach us. Tennyson is more easily seen to be our helper; he has a light in his surf-beaten lantern which common eyes will less often fail to see. His way is that of our own minds more often and steadily—and he is less likely, if he comes close to us, to upset our little toiling craft by his weight and rapid motion. These things being so, let us look into the message which will probably be his alone to get into our thinking and life at a critical hour.

I do not think, as may already be surmised, that his distinctive message comes in that greatest of all psalms of grief and loss and love and hope: "In Memoriam." It has a place above the "Adonais" of Shelley, because of its deeper insight and loftier confidence. It is as much more informing to other children of sorrow than Milton's "Lycidas" as the age was more introspective and inscrutable to its own overstrained eye. It moves like a stream through the lands where Matthew Arnold gathered cold dews with white flowers which he has strewn upon the grave of

Arthur Hugh Clough; it increases in volume while with crystal purity it becomes recipient of many spotless and molten snow-fields descending from the lofty solitudes of fear and truth; it is now a dirge and now a hymn, now a threnody and now a psalm, always reflecting the shadow of the oak as well as that of the bending willow, and ever moving through a changeful landscape comprising seventeen years of a valley. It glides on widening, winding, cleaving a way for itself seaward, until at length, with a rush of restrained confidences, it enters the mightier truth from which it had aforetime come in cloud and vapour—and no greater truth ever welcomed the attained harmony of so many truths than this:

“Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen Thy face,
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove;

“Thine are these orbs of light and shade;
Thou madest Life in man and brute;
Thou madest Death; and lo, Thy foot
Is on the skull which Thou hast made.

“Thou wilt not leave us in the dust :
Thou madest man, he knows not why,
He thinks he was not made to die ;
And Thou hast made him : Thou art just.

“Thou seemest human and divine,
The highest, holiest manhood, Thou :
Our wills are ours, we know not how ;
Our wills are ours, to make them Thine.”

“In Memoriam” is usually accepted as Tennyson’s best, for it seems the completest and most majestically rhymed presentation—after a noble order, be it said—of his religious convictions and hopes. But it was only seventeen years in the making. This casket for such a string of gems had only seventeen years from the time its plan was seen until its key was turned in the enchased lock. “In Memoriam” could not, therefore, comprise answers to the many involved questions which rose between 1831 when he touched with moulding power the legend of Elaine and that day, sixty and more years after, when the world entered the presence of King Arthur for the last time with Lord Tennyson as sponsor. It is also true that, although “In Memoriam” deals with much

that is most precious in the spirit of man, his knowledge, his imagination, his reason, his faith and his hope, and all in the light of modern philosophy which dethrones or reënthrones everything, and with a mastery of the modern scientific method enriching Tennyson with that culture and information which astonish the learned of a learned age, it does not lead us to that fact called conscience, fling us at its feet when the foundations are made to shake, point us to its summit when a fatalistic philosophy has darkened it with cloud, and wait with us through such hours of earthquake as nothing save conscience has known in all the history of man's moral development. Nothing which man must believe in so sincerely, if he is to be and remain a man—nothing at least within the last fifty years—has been so besieged and so apparently demolished at times as has man's conscience. It would seem that, while a great poet's masterpiece might not be the epic of conscience, if the poet of our time essayed to leave a work which would surely hold its place for all time as a masterpiece, its numbers must move between two permanencies, the broken

law of Sinai and the broken life of Calvary.

This is the distinction of the "Idylls of the King." It is the achievement of Tennyson's genius in which "the light that never was on sea or land," which Wordsworth saw, bathes that territory of the soul of which there is no geography for our eyes, and while mystic vapours rise from murmuring streams or clashing armies wage battle between enchanting silences, the truth informing all of it is binding tumultuous and tender years into a drama of human failure so deep that we lose our way in its agonizing defiles, so bewildering with gleaming accoutrement that we are blind to all reality, unless we behold steadily—and it is Tennyson's glory that he keeps it before us and makes our eye look and look again upon it at every turn in the long tragic way—the white and awful summit called conscience. So long as men read the "Idylls of the King," science will have to make record of a fact which is at least as real as a shell and as provable as the working of any law. It is this: that white and awful summit crowns a grander eminence and

rests on a broader base ; and it is not only awful and white, but it is immovable. Once more let us remember that his confidence in the ultimate victory of good over evil grew stronger ; and with each advancing year Tennyson approached more reverently and lovingly the presence of God as his finer faith conceived Him.

Never has there been so much written by any poet, save Browning, which goes to prove that in the test of conduct which is "three-fourths of life" and which bears that proportional part in determining the worth or worthlessness of our beliefs, and in a mind of the first quality, there is something valuable in the truth expressed by what are called pantheistic writers, like Hegel and Erigena, Spinoza and Aratus ; and this something makes for the conception of personality. This will ever be paradoxical to those who have not felt that the most truly personal moments in one's life are those in which the Divine life reaches the highest mark ; yes, even to the effacing of all marks whatsoever. Who doubts, in such an experience, that conscience is God-empowered and is His

voice and presence—His self-revelation in man? This may help some persons who have much difficulty to see how Tennyson reinforces, by reinvigorating the fact and function of conscience, without holding to the traditional theology, including Lockean metaphysics and Paley's watch-like world. It is no desire or expectation of mine to employ Tennyson to help any one to hold any of this—especially the notion of conscience which obtained when most of our creeds were written. It is a far more serious, noble, and commanding reality—this fact and factor called conscience; and it stands with terrible splendour, all unmoved in the soul of one who believes enough in good, not only to hate evil but to anticipate its final overthrow.

“The wish, that of the living whole
No life may fail beyond the grave,
Derives it not from what we have
The likest God within the soul?

“I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope thro' darkness up to God,

“ I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.”

The story of King Arthur was ten centuries old and more when it came under the touch of Alfred Tennyson. It has, indeed, suffered a sea-change into something rich and strange; but its oceanic significance still abides. Here the elemental passions and yearnings have the throb of the infinite behind them; and they beat against the pristine coasts of man's soul. It is the most modern thing coming out of the chivalry or mediævalism of England, because of the steady flame of moral enthusiasm which moves within every line of the tradition as Lord Tennyson uses it. Taking unto itself the highest interests of human conduct and hope, Tennyson's genius is confessedly ethical in intention. We find him here fusing many legends into a unity from which, after it has hardened to a mirror in the lower temperature of a moral philosophy, the conscience may see the features of itself. No one but a great artist could have

compelled so many elements and so various, to compose a portrait at once white as snow and pathetic to the stirring of tears, without giving the appearance of disintegrating a strong literary figure and fact to obtain a weak result in morals. If Tennyson's Arthur is weak, his is the weakness through which the soul and the world are made strong. "Thy gentleness hath made me great"—this is man's answer to the method of God Himself, who is "the great poet"; and Christianity gave the world nothing so powerful as He Himself who said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." Crosses only are permanent thrones. The value of Tennyson's treatment of this story lies in its deeper explication of the Christian indictment against sin—deeper than any less profound and searching religious philosophy may ever dream of. Here we will see that the horror of sin has its sting in the attack made upon the good which alone furnishes a foundation for the universe.

Arthur, the King, is, even in spite of our age's deification of assertive and often coarse energy, the expression of faith.

purity and love. No one but an intense believer in the supremacy of conscience, a poet whose priestly functions are allied with those of the true prophet, could have avoided lessening the moral effect of this great poem by some such incorporation as, for example, the story that Modred was Arthur's natural son, the child of Bellicent whom Arthur did not know as his half-sister, but for whom he had an impure passion. Of course, Swinburne urges upon Tennyson a criticism in harmony with the less distinctly ethical tendencies of his own poems, and he cannot forgive the laureate for refusing to portray something which might relax the grip of conscience on Guinevere. Let it be a flaw in the King's character, or some past shame clinging to his life. It is entirely in harmony with a down-grade view of conscience, cynical or rampant in the last fifty years, to presume that somehow, if we knew all, every Guinevere is "more sinned against than sinning." This Shakespearean phrase will never fit Guinevere, unless we abrogate Shakespeare's moral standards, and Tennyson's are fundamentally the same. The old British

legends may sustain Swinburne's conception of Arthur's sin and its developing retribution. But Tennyson's genius sets itself to portray, for an age whose surviving institutions are threatened with destruction from personal wrong-doing, the indubitable features of Guinevere's falsity and the disastrous consequences of her guilt. He will not weaken the effect of her personal influence in the process of bringing about the ruin of the Round Table, by discounting the significance of the event ; nor shall its real cause be lost sight of by a reference to any sin of Arthur's youth as a collateral for it all. He avoids this, first, by leaving this episode to silence and, secondly and more surely, by painting the history of this progressive assertion and victory of evil over good upon the responsive, sensitive tissue of the superb and undisguised soul. In her disloyalty, and so in her remorse, Guinevere stands with Lancelot equally guilty, and none of the laborious preparations which a timid morality would make to convey opiates or antidotes for the acuteness of her malady are permitted by Tennyson. Sins are terrible as results of

the disease ; but such a disease as sin itself is more terrible for the foulness which such a frenzied passion breeds in Guinevere or Lancelot. He will not decrease the weight of her iniquity or the bitterness of her woe by mechanical subtractions. The glory of the human mind is witnessed partly in this—that, intellectually or æsthetically, it would be inartistic if Tennyson should do this ; spiritually and ethically it would be an offense.

Later on in this study, it will be seen that these matters of conscience and its message are not the less imperious when any such palliative as an inadequate religious fervour or a mystical quest is offered. The ethical teaching of Tennyson here is not less vigorous as he shows the futility of superstition, however gorgeously arrayed and devout it may be, to offset sin like that of Guinevere and Lancelot, and the utter folly, if not wickedness, of expecting that form of religion to repair breaches at the Round Table or otherwise to help straighten out this harmed world. A ministry equal to such minstrelsy will see the peril of the sinning soul moving unquietly to and fro between

a wish that iniquity may somehow be proven less than the ugly fact against which conscience and history revolt, and the brainless dream of a poor sanctity relying upon poetic ritual or theatrical ardour at once externally lovely and internally hollow. When pulpits are far gone astray from the awful meaning of the cross, which is a reality of man's memory and of man's imagination—a reality which certainly would have quite faded out of both, had there been no fearful fact in history called sin to which that cross makes satisfactory answer,—and when ministers assume that Guinevere's wrongdoing may be accounted for on any theory which makes Arthur's stainless life and noble dreams matters of indifference or even of folly, then it is well to return to Tennyson, the minstrel, and behold him refusing at the beginning of his great work and declining over and over again in the course of its achievement, any compromise on the part of the behests of conscience as this inner reality has appeared and ruled in the Bible, Dante, and Shakespeare. No misconduct of others, no apparent force of inner fate which

mysteriously operated on Guinevere, can confuse the distinction in Tennyson's mind and art between right and wrong. If Arthur was excluded from the search of the Holy Grail because, as Tennyson thinks, the search was an abandoning of the less apparently religious, but really more holy task of restoring order on earth; if Arthur is so cold and lofty that Guinevere afterwards says :

"I thought I could not breathe in that fine air,
That pure serenity of perfect light —
I wanted warmth and colour which I found
In Lancelot,"

if she also says :

"To me
He is all fault who hath no fault at all :
For who loves me must have a touch of earth ;
The low sun makes the colour,' "

and if Vivien has a grossness unrelieved by any kind of dignity,—Tennyson is moved by none of these. They are only circumstances like those of which we are perpetually reminded by a school of philosophers who would make

sin something less destroying in its nature and consequences than it really is. Whatever may be the force of environment or the anæsthetic ethical theory for troublesome reflection, Tennyson never swerves from the idea that sin is a personal affair, the missing of the mark, indeed, but a transgression also—a personal revolt, and of such power and certainty of self-propagation that its consequences upon the world and its hopes are never so awful as its consequences upon the human self-will which initiates it.

In the first poem we get some outline of the moral beauty in the presence of which evil begins to enact its bold tragedy. The picture is as psychologically true as a leaf from the gospels where we see Judas becoming darker-souled every day in the light and presence of his Christ. Merlin, who is masterful of all knowledge, who is ever reminding us in many ways of the weak but brainy Hamlet of Shakespeare, or a straying Paracelsus of Browning, makes a declaration of King Arthur's place in the world, in words as memorable as are the lambent flames

which were said to have played around him as a babe :

“ From the great deep to the great deep he goes.”

Tennyson may have never thought, at the first, of the epical orchestration he was to give to the theme of King Arthur and the Round Table ; but it came as a necessity to art and truth. 1870 was the date of the publication of the “ Coming of Arthur.” The date is also significant as that of Stuart Mill’s *Essays* and Huxley’s sketched automaton or the chess-player in life. Conscience was perishing in the test-tube of science and the ratiocination of philosophy. But here came a life-picture which was more than an argument for conscience ; it was a statement of facts upon which the moral universe is founded and by which moral activity goes on. This statement of facts was a judgment already rendered against evil tendencies of the time which were quite willing to have the protection of the philosophy of Stuart Mill and Mr. Huxley. Tennyson’s mission is not yet done. We still have to learn that Arthur, who may stand for the rational soul, is always threatened in his

kingdom by the powers of sense, by pleasure and passion, and by selfishness. Ours is a golden moment like that when

“ the king in low deep tones,
And simple words of great authority,
Bound them by so strait vows to his own self,
That when they rose, knighted from kneeling,
some
Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,
Some flush'd, and others dazed, as one who wakes
Half-blinded at the coming of a light.”

We think we are too civilized for such an incursion of brutality as once laid waste Arthur's royal dream, but the truth is that our enervated and tenuous life need fear nothing else so much.

Sir Lancelot is apparently bound to his king in fine seriousness.

“ ‘ Thou dost not doubt me king,
So well thine arm hath wrought for me to-day.’
‘ Sir and my liege,’ he cried, ‘ the fire of God
Descends upon thee in the battle-field :
I know thee for my king ! ’ Whereat the two,
For each had warded either in the fight,
Sware on the field of death a deathless love.
And Arthur said, ‘ Man's word is God in man :
Let chance what will, I trust thee to the death. ’ ”

A careful and sympathetic study of Merlin at his first appearance here prepares us for finding out that the intellectual acumen and mysterious skill allied to great achievement of knowledge at any time cannot prove itself the saviour of Arthur, or make Merlin self-protective against the heat and breath of base desire. Guinevere is hardly ever to be mistaken for anything more nor less than that assemblage of powers which nestle and reign in a woman's heart, and with which every Arthur must be genuinely wedded in order that he may even dream, and much more that he may do what he dreams, as he cries :

“Then might we live together as one life,
And reigning with one will in everything
Have power on this dark land to lighten it,
And power on this dead world to make it live.”

She is at least superb in capability of promise.

“And Arthur said, ‘Behold, thy doom is mine.
Let chance what will, I love thee to the death!’
To whom the queen replied with drooping eyes,
‘King and my lord, I love thee to the death!’”

Around these two move the knights of the Round Table. They stand for the lofty faculties of our humanity with which every hopeful vision of the King and his kingdom must be allied. These are the faculties which are to enter into all the activities of the kingdom, and they rejoice on the coronation and the marriage of King Arthur and Queen Guinevere, when faith, hope, and charity stand near, and Excalibur—the sword of the Spirit—is given to the King by the Lady of the Lake, “clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful.” Soon the war has begun, and Arthur, who thus obeys the church, is seen to be the royal foe against the evil which disorders the world. It is all of yesterday ; it is of to-day also.

The minister of to-day will join with the student of psychology to pay homage to a minstrel who is even nearer the heart and intellect of humanity to-day, as men deal with the problem of civilization and its methods and hopes, than he was when the first of the “Idylls of the King” was written so long ago. Tennyson’s place as a philosopher of ethical phenomena is surer far than Mill’s or Huxley’s. Peace

and law and governmental order are still to be brought about by one like Arthur, who cannot work without love and who does not expect love to exist for long without work. Now that we are in an age of Tolstoi and William Morris, he must be more certainly than ever the redeemer of waste lands and wasted souls. He may be called a practical statesman, a constructive reformer, or an inspiring leader; one thing is sure, he will not believe in following fantastic and exhausting dreams, the "wandering fires" of the mind. It is of the utmost importance that we should honour the light of that good sense in Arthur's eye as he looks forward to the time when he shall stand between the two perils; on the one side the iniquity of his own court, and on the other side, the fascinating superstition and fanaticism of those who leave the world's work following useless visions. He cries:

" O ye stars that shudder over me
O earth that soundest hollow under me
Vext with waste dreams ! "

When Lancelot appears, we are struck

with his full and convincing humanity. The cup of his life fairly overflows with wine.

Here is King Arthur's first address to his manhood :

“ ' Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom I have
Most joy and most affiance, for I know
What thou hast been in battle by my side,
And many a time have watched thee at the tilt
Strike down the lusty and long practiced knight,
And let the younger and unskilled go by
To win his honour and to make his name,
And loved thy courtesies and thee, a man
Made to be loved ; but now I would to God,
Seeing the homeless trouble in thine eyes,
Thou couldst have loved this maiden, shaped, it
seems,
By God for thee alone, and from her face,
If one may judge the living by the dead,
Delicately pure and marvellously fair,
Who might have brought thee, now a lonely man,
Wifeless and heirless, noble issue, sons
Born to the glory of thy name and fame,
My knight, the great Sir Lancelot of the Lake. ' ”

Even though at last we see that

“ His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true,”

—even then the pure Elaine may half
adore him, for

“Marred as he was, he seemed the goodliest man
That ever among ladies ate in hall,
And noblest, when she lifted up her eyes.
However marred, of more than twice her years,
Seamed with an ancient sword-cut on the cheek,
And bruised and bronzed, she lifted up her eyes
And loved him, with that love which was her
doom.”

What a height to fall from ! How deep
must be any hell corresponding to such
a heaven of power and possibility.
When the King sends him to fetch
Guinevere, after Arthur and Lancelot
have fought against rebellious Kings,
saved each other's lives and plighted an
eternal love, we are aware that more than
chemic forces are at work in this solution
which may throw down an unwelcome
precipitate. We feel that we have come
upon an event in the lives of all of these
persons at court which will reveal their
souls, lighten up the sky above them to a
higher glory, or dig deep an abyss of ruin
below to a profounder hell than mediæval
theology ever pictured.

We looked for the king when

“Lancelot passed away among the flowers,
(For then was latter April) and returned
Among the flowers, in May, with Guinevere,”

and we did not anticipate that Guinevere
would ever characterize her Arthur as

“A moral child without the craft to rule.”

These three persons have each their share of what we call human nature, and their tragedy is possible in every age like our own which Tennyson, even now, instructs against its low-browed vulgarity of both money and penury, its studious meannesses and its unequalled heroisms; its thick-breathed indifferences and the intrusive gospelizing of its scepticism. It is scepticism—doubt as to the worth of goodness which willingly confuses it with anything less self-revealing than itself in the experience of conscience. This scepticism is not always aware of itself in pulpits, where it is as poisonous in the statement of the *untruth* which is in Pantheism and which relieves us of personal responsibility, as it is in the form

of offering to impurity and injustice inadequate conceptions of right and wrong. These are each and all disastrous alike to excellent literature and noble lives.

Against these all, with the Round Table now established and the Knights riding away to subdue the oppressor, Tennyson gives a more radiant meaning to this Golden Time. It is not a place or era for worldlings or weaklings; and in the second of these poems, "Gareth and Lynette," there works a virility with tenacity of mind which accords with human life. No delicacy or enchantment may hide from us the encounter at Castle Perilous or the nobility of the strife against all fleshly appetite. Soon after Tennyson has pictured to us the kingdom of Arthur and we are full of anticipation as to the future of the Round Table, an anticipation made vigorous by the gay energy of Gareth, with what singular invasion of distrust, through the Idyll called "Enid," the serpentine rumour slides in, which breathes the first nameless poison in an air which all must live in and which only a little time ago was so sunny and benign! The change is known to any close student

of the psychology of sinning and the history of its impersonal result on social units. The cause of it is the just suspicion that Guinevere and Lancelot are lovers and false to King Arthur.

If ever minister must go to minstrel in order to discover the taint of death with which an atmosphere may become charged at the first, in which even yet beings may live, though uncertainly and dreamily, let him find it in that hour when Enid is exalted by the attachment of Guinevere, and when the very loftiness of such a position in life makes the evil report to which any one gives currency a baser coin of sinister magnitude, because it goes through such good and bad hands. Let him feel the strain when a sincere purpose to do right and to be right, embodied in some Geraint, strives to maintain its vitality in the foul air. This is not hell perhaps; but this is a way to it. Even here the path is hot; grass and bloom are parched. Not an external, mechanical, penal hell in this, but it is more awful because it is consequential, and it is more abiding because the soul builds it of the soul's self. Here is ■

picture of the hatefulness of every such an influence as this which has already fallen upon everything that is made more abominable to the conscience which Tennyson keeps in training through these poems. It is more abominable because Guinevere's reputation for virtue, which has now been attacked, is always finely protected by the white radiance of the King, the no less snowy purity of Enid, and the firm attitude which Geraint takes as against all reports and all suspicions. Tennyson here restrains himself mightily ; but he cannot keep us from feeling the pathos of the situation.

Though it is early in the story, the past has wonderfully quickened our sense of the destructiveness of any faithlessness like this of the Queen and Lancelot. Tennyson may be criticised for the insanity of Geraint's later jealousy, but he will not be criticised by men who know human life and perceive the wreckage wrought by Vivien, not so much because of what she herself, the loose-tongued siren, has done, or what she may be seeking, but because of the more wretched disaster wrought by the Queen. This disaster lies in the fact

that she has unbound the hitherto manageable passions which are ever hiding in decencies, until some great one has fallen low ; and then they yelp with cynical joy that man is the child of hell, not of heaven. Guinevere's shame makes such a woman as Vivien shameless. Her ecstasy of conquest comes when, not even the Queen dare restrain her festival at the ruin of human hope. The enchantress had failed with the King himself. As that apparently cold and white being paused and seemed for an instant about to melt before her, her fires were quenched in the few crystal drops which fell in the chill damp air. On the other hand, the deadly charm by which mere intellect always falls into the meshes prepared by passion is still hers.

Here we see the saying illustrated :

"For men at most differ as heaven and earth,
But women, worst and best, as Heaven and Hell."

It is only a stronger picture of the weakness of intellect alone, added to the Hamlet of Shakespeare and the Paracelsus of Browning, when we see Merlin in the hands of Vivien.

“And Vivien ever sought to work the charm
Upon the great Enchanter of the Time,
As fancying that her glory would be great
According to his greatness whom she quench’d.”

Geraint, with his unnecessary jealousy, is the product intellectually of that unreasoning iniquity which ever communicates its madness to the atmosphere. As we see him, we can say with Tennyson :

“O purblind race of miserable men,
How many among us at this very hour
Do forge a lifelong trouble for ourselves
By taking true for false, or false for true—”

Geraint is not a great person ; but we begin to see in his confusion, the impossibility of Arthur’s kingdom resting for long, even upon the foundations of human nature, for they are restless and disturbed, and certain malevolent acids are in the air pulling the structure down. All this makes a searching appeal to us, as we try once more to see :

“Clear honour shining like the dewy star
Of dawn, of faith in their great King, with pure
Affection, and the light of victory,
And glory gain’d, and ever more to gain.”

Sad as Geraint's heart is, in fearing that his wife Enid must suffer reproach as the Queen's friend because of the suspicions against the Queen herself, the picture of his mental weakness is quite as appealing. Yet it is weak indeed compared to another picture rendered here—the picture of this pervasive satanic influence brighting all hope and endeavour ; and the man comes upon death's spectral hour, while yet 'tis true that

“ Never yet, since high in Paradise
O'er the four rivers the first roses blew,
Came purer pleasure unto mortal kind
Than lived thro' her, who in that perilous hour
Put hand to hand beneath her husband's heart,
And felt him hers again : she did not weep,
But o'er her meek eyes came a happy mist
Like that which kept the heart of Eden green
Before the useful trouble of the rain.”

Even more masterful in his management of light and shade does Tennyson, the artist as well as the moralist, become when he portrays through Balin and Balan a violent temper exiled from the Round Table, now restored, now lost again unto many struggles. Balin appeals strongly to a true ethical philos-

ophy. He strives for character, because he beholds constantly upon his shield nothing less than the Queen's crown. Is there anything more true in the history of such an iniquity, which winds itself down from some high source and glides in and on until it encircles all human interests in a community, than what follows when even humble heroisms die at birth and truly maddened is dependent aspiration? Having heard of the falsity of the Queen to the King and that of Lancelot, from whom as a great knight Balin has sought to learn gentleness, his frenzied wrath hastens to trample his shield. Nothing is so terrible as a cheated confidence. He shrieks so like the Demon of the Wood, that, attacked by his brother, they kill each other. Conscience was present when

“Balan answered low,

‘Good-night, true brother here! Good-morrow
there!

We two were born together, and we die
Together by one doom:’ and while he spoke
Closed his death-drowsing eyes, and slept the
sleep

With Balin, either lock’d in either’s arms,”

and conscience is not less luridly revealing or more assuredly eloquent than when we discover Vivien standing silently by—this Vivien who has removed their helms that each may know the other in death.

But there is a picture even more deeply-toned than this, in this series of richly coloured works of genius, and that is unequalled for its teaching to a time like our own disposed to be prouder of feats of the intellect than of warmth or purity of heart—I mean the portrait of the philosopher-magician, Merlin, while his character is under the disintegrating influence of the enchantress Vivien who now comes forth having tested the charm which Tennyson has described. There is a likeness in these so seemingly unlike characters. Both rely much on enchantment. Merlin enchants by exhausting the intellect: Vivien enchants by emptying the heart. The fire of Vivien's heart, breaking out through and increasing by consuming the fuel of her sensual nature, constantly growing fiercer by the current of air thus set astir, is so much more powerful for invasion than the coldness of

Merlin's mentality is for resistance, that
the latter's molten personality is licked up
on parched ground,

“And lissome Vivien, holding by his heel,
Writhed towards him, slid up his knee and
sat,
Behind his ankle twined her hollow feet
Together, curved an arm about his neck,
Clung like a snake ; and letting her left hand
Droop from his mighty shoulder, as a leaf,
Made with her right a comb of pearl to part
The lists of such a beard as youth gone out
Had left in ashes.”

But she wishes something more and seeks
it through one of the long besiegings of
which passion never tires. She knows
enough to sing

“In Love, if Love be Love, if Love be ours,
Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal powers :
Unfaith in aught is want of faith in all.

“It is the little rift within the lute,
That by and by will make the music mute,
And ever widening slowly silence all.”

Strangely enough, some of the wisest of
earth and the most eminent in intellect
have fallen before such as Vivien just

when Vivien becomes the example of those who

“ Inflate themselves with some insane delight
And judge all Nature from her feet of clay.”

She gathers an awful pre-natal remembrance into her quiver of poisoned arrows and sends it forth to complete her half-fiendish joy at the downfall of Merlin :

“ ‘ My father died in battle against the king,
My mother on his corpse in open field ;
She bore me there, for born from death was I
Among the dead and sown upon the wind —
And then on thee ! ’ ”

The sorrowful fact is that such judgments have their possibility lying back a long way, even in the sin of Guinevere and Lancelot. To show this is to trace the sinfulness of sin to its origin in the responsible personality. Such is Tennyson's philosophy.

In the Idyll of “ Lancelot and Elaine,” the poorness, as well as the richness, of our humanity is strongly and subtly depicted. It is a fearful thing to think of Elaine's defeat in contrast with Vivien's

even temporary triumph. The utter chastity of the one—is it slightly negative? Has it the purity of fire with all its force or the purity of snow only? Whatever be the answer, quivering black is never like this which may be “dark with excess of light” only. Innocence may be as uninteresting to Lancelot as Arthur’s “white flower of a blameless life” is to Guinevere. These surmises come with life’s problems while Vivien’s lust grows hate and Elaine’s love has a snowy lily for bloom called purity. If one must have the biography of a cynical woman, let him watch Vivien’s career. If one will learn the tragedy of innocence, not the epic of holiness, he must live in Elaine’s fantasy—the spiritual fragrance of the woman-soul—and stagger on, or rise on wings, with her spirit even after her death when the diamonds fall into the river,

“And down they flash’d, and smote the stream,
Then from the smitten surface flash’d as it were,
Diamonds to meet them, and they pass’d away.”

It is with the transformation of those gems to tears that we discover this, that

her girlish heart wrecked itself against the Lancelot who could say :

“ Had I chosen to wed,
I had been wedded earlier, sweet Elaine ;
But now there never will be wife of mine.”

Only such a woman, when Lancelot is wounded, could witness to the sinfulness of sin, as

“ Through her own side she felt the sharp lance go.”

Only such a man as Lancelot himself ever may give a true account of his stained and faithless self. He cries out:

“ ‘ Alas for Arthur’s greatest knight, a man
Not after Arthur’s heart ! I needs must break
These bonds that so defame me : not without
She wills it : would I, if she willed it ? Nay,
Who knows ? But if I would not, then may God,
I pray Him, send a sudden angel down
To seize me by the hair and bear me far,
And fling me deep in that forgotten mere,
Among the tumbled fragments of the hills.’ ”

If now we have learned what a ruin any such crowned and beautiful iniquity may achieve, and if, like the knights of

the Round Table, we turn from it all, Tennyson is yet with the human soul, ever faithful and ever true. Now even the knights and ladies must turn to something, and they obey a psychological law in turning, by a certain reactionary process, to religion and to that form of it which most ministers to the sensuous forces whose baleful activity this hot and luxurious atmosphere had excited. There is a world of teaching here for the true minister unto men like ourselves. Religion is never so contemptible as when it offers a retreat from morality. These persons of the court, however, must find such a retreat, for they have abhorred and hated stern morality. Excitements of a supernatural character are the demand of souls who, weary of the high-pitched monotony of sin and brought in sight of its misery, disdain common duties waiting to be done. Some mystic or ascetic gymnastic must be appealed to, that passion of flesh may hide itself in the passion of religion. What philosopher has been truer to our inner history than our poet? These chief persons of Arthur's court were not a little touched with what

is called the insanity of genius. Ordinary laws were too commonplace for them. Society and institutions—and Tennyson is the singer of the worth of these—are never sacred to their unrestrained romanticism of desire. The thrill and wonder of the miraculous must be had, to give a gleam to heavy eyes and ecstasy to half-exhausted sensibilities. Tennyson's account of all this, in their effort to escape the results of sensuality by adopting sensuousness in religious life by way of a sensational search for the Holy Grail, is the wisest and fearfulest indictment ever made against a theatric form of religion as a refuge for man when he has failed to obey the religion of duty and righteousness.

Here appears the grandeur of puritanism with all its lack of charm and art, its baldness and its antipathy to mere gesture and costume in piety. Tennyson will not permit us to believe that the King joins not in this search for the Holy Grail—though Sir Gawain is disloyal and Lancelot has felt remorse—because the King has long ago sinned. His King Arthur had a royal reason

within himself. Tennyson is too true to psychological conditions following years of stainless life, to accord with any tradition or his vapid critics at this point. He will colour for us the Year of Miracle as has not been painted since Tintoretto. The heaven of heavens will yield him hues for his high portrayal of souls engaged in rapturous moral blundering. His Percivale may suggest with a dauntless realism the reflected accounts of those ecstasies usually oblivious of simple duties undone. But his King Arthur, never so kingly as now, like his Christ who, when His disciples were disputing about their occupancy of the twelve thrones in the upper room at Jerusalem just before the Crucifixion, flashed both a human and divine light upon all of it and took a towel to wash the feet of the disputants—King Arthur will banish visions, if need be, though he has more of these than all of them ; and he who is so royal in soul-fibre and experience that he knows the sublimity of duty even when his fortunes have waned to a shred of hope—*he* will not play or treat with visions, his task being always in his eye :

“And some among you held, that if the King
Had seen the sight he would have sworn the
vow :

Not easily, seeing that the King must guard
That which he rules, and is but as the hind
To whom a space of land is given to plough,
Who may not wander from the allotted field
Before his work be done ; but, being done,
Let visions of the night or of the day
Come, as they will ; and many a time they
come,

Until this earth he walks on seems not earth,
This light that strikes his eyeball is not light,
This air that smites his forehead is not air,
But vision—yea, his very hand and foot —
In moments when he feels he cannot die,
And knows himself no vision to himself,
Nor the high God a vision, nor that One
Who rose again : ye have seen what ye have
seen.”

Against this “clear-shining after rain,”
how sullenly moves the fool remembered
from “The Last Tournament,” who ad-
umbrates that ray of light which always
falls on love and service. The end comes.
The dish once in use at the Last Supper
of Jesus with His disciples, Joseph’s
treasured last drop of the blood which
fell to him from the Christ’s riven side,

the sacramental efficacy of the Grail are not of supreme worth compared with King Arthur's devotion to common duties. As the whole epic moves towards a conclusion, we learn much. We learn that while heaven is attractive to religious souls, earth is the place to win heaven; that passionate purity alone may weave of a maiden's hair a girdle for Galahad, the warrior, and he alone may win the sight of the Grail, as did the nun, Percivale's sister; that Galahad never retires from the world of duties and tasks; that while Merlin may fear to sit in the chair where men lose themselves, Galahad cries: "If I lose myself, I save myself"; and that, of course, he clings to the thing which never leaves his sight or thought, and so, as he says, he has rode,

"Shattering all evil customs everywhere.

It past thro' Pagan realms and made them mine,
And clashed thro' Pagan hordes and bore them
down,

And broke thro' all, and in the strength of this
Came victor."

But where is Lancelot? The King in-
quires:

“ ‘Thou, too, my Lancelot, my friend,
Our mightiest, hath this quest availed for thee ? ’ ”

This is his sad reply :

“ ‘Our mightiest ! ’ answered Lancelot, with ■
groan ;

‘ O King, my friend, if friend of thine I be,
Happier are those that welter in their sin,
Swine in the mud, that cannot see for slime,
Slime of the ditch : but in me lived a sin
So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure,
Noble, and knightly in me twined and clung
Round that one sin, until the wholesome flower
And poisonous grew together, each as each,
Not to be plucked asunder, ’ ”

and his heart sobs :

“ ‘ O yet methought I saw the Holy Grail,
All palled in crimson samite, and around,
Great angels, awful shapes, and wings and eyes.
And but for all my madness and my sin,
And then my swooning, I had sworn I saw
That which I saw ; but what I saw was veiled
And covered ; and this quest was not for me. ’ ”

The Holy Grail has been seen, but it
does not save. The Round Table is
demolished. Lancelot and Guinevere are

torn apart by forces they have themselves
nursed with fondness.

“The queen
Looked hard upon her lover, he on her ;
And each foresaw the dolorous day to be :
And all talk died, as in a grove all song
Beneath the shadow of some bird of prey ;
Then a long silence came upon the hall,
And Modred thought, ‘The time is hard at
hand.’ ”

And Arthur, the King, what of him ?

“That night came Arthur home, and while he
climbed,
All in a death-dumb autumn-dripping gloom,
The stairway to the hall, and look’d and saw
The great Queen’s bower was dark,—about his
feet
A voice clung sobbing till he questioned it,
‘What art thou?’ and the voice about his feet
Sent up an answer, sobbing, ‘I am thy fool,
And I shall never make thee smile again.’ ”

Yet is this all? Is Tennyson untrue
to the words: “Where sin abounded,
there grace did much more abound”?
Surely not. Within certain limits of time,
we have swept through this gallery of
pictures. A definite, coherent, powerful

philosophy of life keeps them all upon the walls of the soul. At length, we come to the dreadful conclusion of sin's logical development. Not to a hopeless end, however, have we come. There is hope when sin consumes itself in its defiance of love. Even now it falters and sickens and sobs its repentance. Tristram on the day of the last tournament seeks the prize, and—O hideousness of irony in the annal of sin!—Lancelot asks him: "Art thou the purest, brother?" only to be seared by the reply: "Be happy in your fair Queen, as I in mine." The rain comes and women scoff. It is all they can do now. Arthur as a King may yet serve only to make the cause of his disaster more visible. Lancelot is whipped "into waste fields far away," with scarred elements of nobleness in him even yet. But the real world has vanished, though hearts beat still. And now the ruin appears, for light divine falls into these burned-out aisles and upon the strewn terraces, yet a cold mist

"Like a face-cloth to the face
Clung to the dead earth, and the land was still."

All the rhythmic strength of Tennyson, with pellucid sympathy and an accuracy of ethical self-command which must be studied to be understood, is devoted to the record of the self-destruction of this germ of desire which for so long has developed its virulent quality. The true observer of human life and its experience will bear with the philosopher now, for Tennyson is a more heavily laden thinker here than was the author of "In Memoriam." He knows more and he rejects more of what he thought was known. We may well stand silently here for a moment to wait on him, for, even now, he has found his bearings. He has looked into humanity and observed much of God and man even since he made King Arthur say sadly :

"I found Him in the shining of the stars,
I mark'd Him in the flowering of His fields,
But in His ways with men I find Him not.
I waged His wars, and now I pass and die.
O me ! for why is all around us here
As if some lesser god had made the world,
But had not force to shape it as he would,
Till the High God behold it from beyond,
And enter it and make it beautiful ?

Or else as if the world were wholly fair,
But that these eyes of men are dense and dim,
And have not power to see it as it is :
Perchance, because we see not to the close ; —
For I, being simple, thought to work His will,
And have but stricken with the sword in vain ;
And all whereon I leaned in wife and friend
Is traitor to my peace, and all my realm
Reels back into the beast and is no more.
My God, Thou hast forgotten me in my death :
Nay—God my Christ—I pass but shall not die.”

Nothing now can postpone the calamity
of soul in Guinevere. Even her lover,
Lancelot, must help to dig her hell the
deeper into herself. Modred is on his
victorious path to the throne, when he
peers upon the Queen and Lancelot who
are met for the last time.

“ Passion-pale they met
And greeted. Hands in hands, and eye to eye,
Low on the border of her couch they sat
Stammering and staring. It was their last hour,
A madness of farewells. And Modred brought
His creatures to the basement of the tower
For testimony ; and crying with full voice
‘ Traitor, come out, ye are trapt at last,’ aroused
Lancelot, who rushing outward lionlike
Leapt on him, and hurl’d him headlong, and he
fell

Stunn'd, and his creatures took and bare him off,
And all was still : then she, ' The end is come
And I am shamed forever ; ' and he said,
' Mine be the shame ; mine was the sin : but rise,
And fly to my strong castle overseas :
There will I hide thee, till my life shall end,
There hold thee with my life against the world.'
She answer'd, ' Lancelot, wilt thou hold me so ?
Nay, friend, for we have taken our farewells.
Would God that thou couldst hide me from
myself ! ' "

Yes ; it is also with one's self one has to reckon ; and this is of the same philosophy which indited the description of the wanderer—" when he came to *himself*."

She flees to a convent ; but she cannot escape herself. Lancelot, with all his inherent moral value, cannot pay the debt incurred to her, to Arthur, to himself. Rich in ability, he is morally bankrupt. In her sequestration, the Queen's sin is made more manifest to her by the little novice's song : " Too late, ye cannot enter now." Lancelot, " love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen," may say : " I needs must break these bonds that so defame me," only to add instantly : " Not without she wills it." Yes : the chain that

enslaves me the most is the one I love the most. It is not of rusted iron, but of gold and it is jewelled. Guinevere's words to Lancelot were indeed agonies.

But a more fearful judgment awaits her—this is the judgment-power of that greatest fact in morals, the Incarnation of God in man—she must meet King Arthur. Let these words of the *Te Deum* be always sung: "We believe that Thou shalt be our Judge." Sorrowful as are her words with Lancelot, this is the terrible eminence of her grief when the King speaks to her:

"He paused, and in the pause she crept an
inch

Nearer, and laid her hands about his feet.

Far off a solitary trumpet blew.

Then waiting by the doors the warhorse neigh'd
As at a friend's voice, and he spake again:

"Yet think not that I come to urge thy
crimes,

I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,

I, whose vast pity almost makes me die

To see thee, laying there thy golden head,

My pride in happier summers, at my feet.

The wrath which forced my thoughts on that
fierce law,

The doom of treason and the flaming death,
(When first I learnt thee hidden here) is past.
The pang—which while I weigh'd thy heart
with one

Too wholly true to dream untruth in thee,
Made my tears burn—is also past—in part.
And all is past, the sin is sinn'd, and I,
Lo! I forgive thee, as Eternal God
Forgives: do thou for thine own soul the rest.
But how to take last leave of all I loved?
O golden hair, with which I used to play
Not knowing! O imperial-moulded form,
And beauty such as never woman wore,
Until it came a kingdom's curse with thee —
I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,
But Lancelot's: nay, they never were the King's.'
I cannot take thy hand, that too is flesh,
And in the flesh thou hast sinned; and mine
own flesh

Here looking down on thine polluted, cries
'I loath thee': yet not less, O Guinevere,
For I was ever virgin save for thee,
My love thro' flesh hath wrought into my life
So far, that my doom is, I love thee still.
Let no man dream but that I love thee still.
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
Hereafter in that world where all are pure
We two may meet before high God, and thou
Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know
I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,

Nor Lancelot, nor another. Leave me that,
 I charge thee, my last hope. Now must I hence.
 Thro' the thick night I hear the trumpet blow :
 They summon me their King to lead mine hosts
 Far down to that great battle in the west,
 Where I must strike against my sister's son,
 Leagued with the lords of the White Horse and
 knights

Once mine, and strike him dead, and meet myself
 Death, or I know not what mysterious doom.
 And thou remaining here wilt learn the event ;
 But hither shall I never come again,
 Never lie by thy side, see thee no more,
 Farewell !

And while she grovell'd at his feet,
 She felt the King's breath wander o'er her neck,
 And, in the darkness o'er her fallen head,
 Perceived the waving of his hands that blest."

Guinevere cannot answer now. She
 can only stammer forth later : " His
 mercy choked me."

" The wrath of the Lamb ! "

Awful and pathetic as is burden of the
 phrase of the Revelator, yet we may well
 say that something of the " wrath of the
 Lamb " is in these words and in this end.
 Does any traditional conception of hell go
 so deep, burn so fiercely, or appear so
 certain as this ? If not, it is for the same
 reason that none of the traditional con-

ceptions of heaven is so high or so glorious as this which possesses the soul of King Arthur when he says farewell to Guinevere, leaving her half-hidden in the splendour of Christian hope. What we need to ponder are these things—the art of the poet still kindles its torch where the Bible and Dante and Shakespeare found “Sinai all aflame”; and Tennyson’s Higher Pantheism and Larger Hope are worth studying, again and again, in the light of the Idylls, that we may ascertain if the truth which lies in what is called the Higher Pantheism may not reinforce and honour conscience, giving conscience a rightful place on the judgment-seat such as neither any past dogmatic theology nor any fatalistic philosophy has thought of, and, most of all, if we must not welcome an ethical vision of God which radiates with what Tennyson names the Larger Hope. This vision will create an awe within the soul and inspire such a revolt of character against evil as must ever reflect not only the throne of God, but the great throne of God; and not only the great throne, but The Great White Throne.

LECTURE IV

ROBERT BROWNING

IN our study of the poets whose verses have most adequately expressed the spiritual problem of our time, or most effectively uttered its solution, we have thus far had to do with singers, the acknowledged triumph of whose art has conspired, with strength of imagination or truth of thought, to make their poetry attractive. Both Arnold and Tennyson are artistic ; —the one by the growth of a talent severely trained by classical models, the other by the influence of a genius which has left its impress upon the very language in which it has worked. Robert Browning's most devoted eulogist, however, will hardly assert that he is as musical in expression, as he is great and true in conception. He must not be praised for his finish or for his beauty—and these are marks of the artist. Always will it be suspected that these lofty ideas and rich sentiments might have had a more worthy

form. Power in its lawlessness will forever seem to have lorded it over harmony—and thus to have been less powerful than it ought to have been; since real power never wholly expresses itself save in harmony with grace. “Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.” More like Angelo than like Raphael, Browning lived in an age of over-refinement, with an undismayed trust in pure power. He had seen Lord Tennyson multiply his miniatures and enjoy the longest day of fame which any English singer has known, as he gave one after another of his exquisite pictures to an admiring public, Browning all the while showing that, if he desired to do so, he could do some beautiful things as well, but instantly retreating from the dew-drop to the thunder-cloud where is the hiding of power.

Browning was like his own Paracelsus, who says :

“God’s intimations rather fail
In clearness than in energy,”

as Tennyson was more like his own King Arthur, simply

“Wearing the white flower of a blameless life.”

Tennyson, as an artist, with his faultless harmony, his delicate purity, his fine colour, and his serene certainty of stroke, teaches the holiness of beauty ; Browning, if he may be called an artist, with his rugged force, his intense passion for movement, his nervous splendour, his abrupt change from an old to a new purpose, teaches the holiness of power. As a religious teacher, Tennyson helps us to learn from his weary sinners and his lovely saints, the beauty of holiness ; Browning, from his wretched ruins and his sublime devotees, the power of holiness.

I do not offer this brief comparison as a complete account of these poets or their ministry, but I am persuaded that as Tennyson has been the best leader for our faith in a somewhat consciously refined age, Mr. Browning will prove to be the best teacher for us, now that the over-refinement of our time begins to yield to the presence of strength. How strong is the genius of Browning may be seen in the perfectly distinct way which he made for himself, after having confessed the power which Shelley had over him,

when, at thirteen years of age, he began to read his writings and to search for others. It has other testimony in the freedom and force with which he masters the vast accumulations of learning which he made in his life under the skies where Leonardo painted and Virgil and Dante had sung. Indeed, Mr. Browning's very trying style is the unpleasant, but resistless evidence of his power. Perhaps every man's weakness is but the exaggeration, or lawless exercise of some untrained strength. This fullness which bursts through rhyme, and this strength which crushes accepted theories of metre; this suddenness of energy which snaps the cords which rhetoricians admire, and this richness which overloads the chariots of verse and makes the bridges in their track to creak with the burden they bear, have come from a great fertile soul whose attribute is certainly not weakness. Here is a man who has subtlety of mind sufficient to understand Hegel and Fichte and Schelling with power enough to teach the idealism of Germany as its waves reach again and again unto our shores, a still deeper idealism. Here is a poet,

often more refined than the refiners who would modify his harsh verse, who yet trusts his powers so faithfully that he sings carelessly :

“ What the poet writes,
He writes ; mankind accepts it if it suits,
And that's success ; if not, the poem's passed
From hand to hand, and yet from hand to hand,
Until the unborn snatch it, crying out
In pity on their fathers being so dull,
And that's success, too.”

He has been conscious that he was often too strong for an age which had read its Tupper and sent “ Yesterday, To-day and Forever ” through so many editions. He says :

“ The public blame originalities.
You must not pump spring water unawares,
Upon a gracious public, full of nerves.”

Concerning these manifestations of this power which do not spring from Browning's effort to express the greatest truths, I have not time to speak at length, so valuable and so comprehensive is his dealing with the ideas, sentiments and

hopes of the larger spiritual life. And it may be said without question, that so long as men believe the dictum which hung upon the wall of Sir William Hamilton's lecture-room : "*There is nothing great on earth but man, there is nothing great in man but mind*" there will be a noble interest in these pages of Browning, in which is told with a power unmatched since Shakespeare, the story of the human mind, with its great harmonies and stormy discords ; its abysmal doubts and heaven-revealing faith ; its brute-like passion, wallowing in the fires of hell ; its godlike aspirations, mounting midst the lights of heaven ; its wild, grand agonies of pain ; its pure, sweet transports of joy.

Walter Savage Landor probably was never more careful of the value of his praise than when he sang :

"Shakespeare is not our poet, but the world's ;
Therefore on him no speech ! and brief for thee,
Browning ! Since Chaucer was alive and hale,
No man hath walked along our roads with step
So active, so inquiring eye, or tongue
So varied in discourse. But warmer climes
Give brighter plumage, stronger wing ; the breeze

Of Alpine heights thou playest with, borne on
Beyond Sorrento and Amalfi, where
The Siren waits thee, singing song for song."

And it was not love at all, but her
critical instinct simply, which led Elizabeth Barrett to expect

"From Browning, some 'Pomegranate' which,
if cut deep down the middle,
Shows a heart within, blood-tinctured, of a veined
humanity."

"Humanity"—that always it is—a
"blood-tinctured, veined humanity"—
that alone it is, by which one man may
understand and reveal men to themselves
and to others; that it is by which even
the Eternal God has revealed Himself in
us and in the Incarnation, Jesus Christ,
—"a blood-tinctured, veined humanity."
Robert Browning has appeared in a time
when a scientific psychology has felt about
fearlessly in human nature for its founda-
tions; and while scalpel and anatomist
have been going together along through
the mysteries of mind and brain, this
many-sided man has put his very soul so
close to throbbing human nature, in

various moods and at sundry times, that his poetry is laden and inspired with the deepest history of the human spirit. He has revealed humanity, through its having told its secrets to his humanity. He has written out, in those moments when it most lifted him towards the throne of the universe, these results which no unpoetic soul may ever group together in its lists of mental phenomena ; he has made the portraits, for all generations, of those men and women whose features have told to him alone the circumstances of their spiritual life, the forces which have acted in their mental growth, the influences which flash out in lightning strokes of passion or compel a prophetic peace.

Now, it is certain that to such a living man as this, facts of human character and life will come which give him a larger view, a surer vision, and a profounder philosophy of human action and destiny, than other men may obtain. Shakespeare furnishes to theology a teaching in Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, which every advancing step of human vision appreciates more highly, because, all unintentionally perhaps, he came so near to humanity that

conscience, reason, hope, love, whispered truths through his dramas, unuttered to other men.

It is the high privilege also of Browning to listen to the humanity of well-nigh all ages ; and living in a somewhat questioning, often hopeless time, to bring back the gospel of hope. Like Shakespeare, the very ruins he finds in wrecked humanity need but such a fine eye and the heart of a "blood-tinctured, veined humanity" such as theirs, to disclose hope hiding there. Here is the phenomenon of our profoundest modern student of what we call "poor human nature," all undiscouraged, singing without a note of pessimism

"Where brooding darkness spreads his jealous
wings
And the night-raven sings."

Do you say Mr. Browning has not gone to the lowly and brutal for any account of man, that his optimism comes because he has not sought to understand the bestial currents of life which war with the spiritual? The answer is a poem like "Caliban Upon Setebos, or Natural

Theology on an Island." With his uncanny ability to throw himself into the existence of another being and to live its most involved and characteristic life, he lives with and by this brute's soul ; the "moon-calf" supplies him with blood in which act and react the beast's very nature, with which "pigs might squeak love-odes, dogs bark satire." In it all, the sottish animalism reaches up for a theology and crouches in terror midst the thunder-storm. Shakespeare's Caliban in "The Tempest" was made a figure for the analytic nineteenth century, when the question of anthropomorphism and of our relations to the animals below us became living ones ; yet, no one who may ever adopt Dr. Wilson's view which makes the Caliban in Shakespeare the missing link of Darwin, will fail to see in Browning's "Caliban upon Setebos" perhaps the finest evidence of how deeply Browning has gone into animal psychology and how surely his genius has comprehended the dark problems which hover over the nature of man.

Man and human hope are what they are to Browning, because he has gone more

deeply than even Tennyson into modern science; because he has an eye for psychological phenomena and an understanding of the real value of the doctrine of natural selection and evolution surer than is even his who sees men as they

“Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.”

By this spiritual and pathological equipment, Browning is sure to have the ear of the next generation, whose fathers have been told not only that the soul is *not* immortal, but also that “man is not only a vertebrate, a mammal, and a primate, but he belongs, as a genus, to the Cata-rhine family of apes.” Of the higher life of man, there is no greater singer. Like his monk, he might say, since love is so supreme in woman:

“For me, I think I speak as I was taught —
I always see the Garden, and God there —
A-making man's wife—and, my lesson learned,
The value and significance of flesh,
I can't unlearn ten minutes afterwards.”

For to him, nature has its goal in man.

The great truth underlying the doctrine of evolution shines with all its optimistic light everywhere in his verses.

The power in the spiritual realm upon which the hopes of this poet stand and the music which inspires his own is Christianity. It furnishes a perpetually true, because growing revelation to the reason of God and humanity ; it supplies the human heart with an affection which strengthens and refines it, and whatever other value real Christianity has, its chief value lies in the gift it has made of motive-power for a motiveless world. It came when the hands of man were hanging down, and the knees were feeble ; it somehow stirred the latent forces of human nature as nothing else has ever done ; it put a new sky over the intellect ; it recreated the human heart by a new and attractive love ; but it also sent along the nerves of the purposeless humanity which it touched, a thrill divine ; and the will of man, clinging to the will of God, began again its all-conquering career. To Robert Browning that great power which came to the world in Christ Jesus is as yet unspent. It is a revelation of

God and man in Christ—the revelation of the fact that they belong to each other by nature—and for him, this revelation, coming upon the human soul, upon the intellect, sensibilities, and will, makes the new humanity.

Of course, it is not scholastic or an ecclesiastical Christianity which has made Browning both poet and priest. No man, however, has more truly apprehended the forms into which men have put the Gospel of Christ, from Pope Innocent XII in "The Ring and the Book," to Renan in the "Epilogue," he has gone over the extreme positions of medieval credulity and modern rationalism. Bishop Blougram and a sceptical Göttingen Professor; the Bishop of St. Praxed and Karshish, the Arab Physician; Fra Lippo Lippi, and Saul; Rabbi Ben Ezra and Mr. Sludge, the Medium;—these are only some of the characters of his poems on whose features play with various language, the lights of Christianity. With such a number of persons, each speaking a characteristic word, it is easy to study their author's interpretation and proclamation of Christianity, as

through them it operates as a controlling force upon the intellect, the sensibilities and the will.

Browning's message to the intellect is his message to the whole man. I look upon him, in the midst of the lights and shadows of our rationalism, as the prophet of the age of reason,—not Voltaire's age of reason, but the Christ's. Our so-called rationalism has largely been the triumph of unreason. We have worshipped logic and have made feast-day over the results of our reasoning. Everything which the feelings have sought to reveal has been called effeminate, and the action of the emotional nature, to which in every age the largest truths have disclosed themselves, has been declared sentimental. Our theology has long been developing a rationalism inside the lines of orthodoxy which finally began to lord it over God's entire spiritual heritage. The mystic has been rejected on all sides; the lover and the bard have been cast out, together with the materialist and sceptic. But now that truths which an unintelligent theology has neglected, come up like unquiet ghosts for

their rightful place, and now that the calculating hardness of our practical materialism seems to resist everything but a deep spiritual experience which runs beyond our intellectual accounts of it, the hour strikes for the singer, whose poetry is often vague and mysterious with visions of the infinite God whose greatness and nearness only the mystics have known,—a poet whose passion is equal to his thought, whose love is as strong as his logic, whose martial strains sound to the sleeping human will as never yet English music has sounded.

Browning saves the intellect, grants it its full scope, and achieves for it its surest successes, by relieving it from dominating the heart and will in the search for truth; he leads it to work together *with* them—one soul,—intellect, sensibilities and will—seeking truth. The head seeking truth or greatness of life, without the heart, is sure to fail. In the words of Paracelsus we have the lofty look of the aspiring searcher for knowledge :

“ Are there not, Festus, are there not, dear Michal,
Two points in the adventure of the diver,

One—when, a beggar, he prepares to plunge,
One—when, a prince, he rises with his pearl?
Festus, I plunge!
(Festus) ‘We wait you when you rise.’”

And what a splendid plunge it is! Let us remember that this poem was written years before the hypothesis of the evolution of the higher from the lower had its statement in scientific phrase. Yet Browning in this matter is not far in advance of Tennyson who sings it all in “In Memoriam.” But there is here a virile apprehension of the scope and pervasiveness of these ideas entirely accordant with the stronger intellect of Browning. He it is who makes Paracelsus say:

“God . . . dwells in all,
From life’s minute beginnings up at last
To man—the consummation of this scheme
Of being, the completion of this sphere
Of life.”

Here we learn that

“God tastes an infinite joy, in infinite ways,”
and that

“In completed man begins anew
A tendency to God.”

Paracelsus reaches the full conception of the "Inner Light." "Truth," he says

"Is within ourselves ; it takes no rise
From outward things. . . .
There is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fullness,"

God always had yearned for

"Some point where all those scattered rays should
meet
Convergent in the faculties of man."

And Paracelsus has faith in Him with

"Just so much of doubt
As bade me plant a surer foot upon
The sun-road."

He sees that it is our glory to

"Add worth to worth,
As wine enriches blood, and straightway send it
forth,
Conquering and to conquer, through all eternity,
That's battle without end."

Even his account of nature must include sentiment, and the pervasive emotion of God almost challenges our love.

"The centre-fire heaves underneath the earth,
And the earth changes like a human face ;

The molten ore bursts up among the rocks,
Winds into the stone's heart, outbranches bright
In hidden mines, spots barren river-beds,
Crumbles into fine sand where sunbeams bask —
God joys therein ! The wroth sea's waves are
edged

With foam, white as the bitten lip of Hate,
When in the solitary waste, strange groups
Of young volcanoes come up, cyclops-like,
Staring together with their eyes on flame ;—
God tastes a pleasure in their uncouth pride !
Then all is still : earth is a wintry clod ;
But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress, passes
Over its breast to waken it ; rare verdure
Buds tenderly upon rough banks, between
The withered tree-roots and the cracks of frost,
Like a smile striving with a wrinkled face ;
The grass grows bright, the boughs are swol'n
with blooms

Like chrysalids impatient of the air ;
The shining dorrs are busy ; beetles run
Along the furrows, ants make their ado ;
Above, birds fly in merry flocks—the lark
Soars up and up, shivering for very joy ;
Afar the ocean sleeps ; white fishing-gulls
Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe
Of nested limpets ; savage creatures seek
Their loves in wood and plain ; and God renews
His ancient rapture ! ”

Paracelsus has the fatal success he de-

sired—it is a triumph of pure intellect. But it is a failure for him, a personal loss ; and it is a failure for truth ; he does not get the richest pearl. What a confession of the failure of mere intellectualism is this ! Knowledge without love, he feels, is sure to end in fog and blinding mist. He meets one who has sought love as he has sought nothing but knowledge. Both have sinned. Fragmentariness has failed to gain what comes to wholeness only :

“ Love me henceforth, Aprile, while I learn
To love ; and, merciful God, forgive us both !
We wake at length from weary dreams ! but both
Have slept in fairy-land. Though dark and drear
Appears the world before us, we no less
Wake with our wrists and ankles jewelled still.
I, too, have sought to *know* as *thou* to *love* —
Excluding love, as thou refuseth knowledge —
Still thou hast beauty and power. We wake !
What penance can devise for both of us ? ”

But why this ill-success of aspiring intellect ?

Aprile has said :

“ I would supply all chasms with music, breathing
Mysterious motions of the soul, no way
To be defined save in strange melodies.”

Aprile tells him this ; and in the telling, it is clear that Browning knows the value of knowledge and estimates the power and privileges of the intellect, yet in all the various music of the great poem, the doom of a fragmentary life—a life merely of intellect—goes sounding sullenly on. Love must have Love's duties and privileges.

“ Love which endures and doubts and is oppressed
And cherished, suffering much and much sustained,
And blind, oft failing, yet believing love,
A half-enlightened, often-chequered trust.”

Christianity is much else, I know, but, to the intellect, Christianity is the re-asserting and reëstablishing of faith as the organ of knowledge and as the method of life. What was the fall of man, but the unreasoning triumph of reason in the soul of man? The serpent which tempted to sin was rationalism, charming but stinging. Man persisted in eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He would not wait in trust upon God's knowledge. He must know for himself. The heart was all love-

less and the will was powerless ; but the reason had won a triumph ; the intellect had its false supremacy. So, all through the centuries of Paganism, the trustless soul had been dominated by the intellect. Many a Cleon had his aching heart and his weak guess. He has not waited for a Browning to make his portrait. Every ancient literature has left the story of his efforts and failure in seeking the highest truth. When Christianity came, it operated, perhaps only incidentally, but effectively, in the soul of man to the re-establishment of faith. If we may distinguish activities as faculties or powers, the reason which had lorded it over the human spirit, then took its place along with sentiment and purpose ; intellect, sensibility, and will were all together drawn into healthful activity in the act of faith. An object of attention came before the whole nature of man, and that object was Jesus who was called the Christ. This was the revolution which the new religion worked in the soul. It did not destroy reason, but it put reason in the proper place ; it thus made reason more reasonable. This accounts for the fact

that while Christianity opposed, at all costs, the ambitious intellect which ruled the world's spirit, it did so, by making faith the organ of knowledge ; it brought about a new and greater era for the intellect ; it made life and thought more truly rational than they had been before. Christianity insists upon faith. Faith is the one act where all there is of a man,—thought, feeling, will,—is active : “ *We are saved by faith.* ” Christianity inspires this act of faith by placing before the soul a fact equally impressive to intellect, sensibilities and will—the Christ of God—a fact whose glory comes through faith alone. It is faith which has in it the intellect's truth, the heart's love and the will's purpose.

This human totality or integrity of Browning's soul is evident in his attitude towards and his treatment of nature. The accumulations of Tennyson's alert and encompassing intelligence which made Thackeray say he was the wisest man he knew and which strikes the student of natural phenomena as astonishing even in the age of Lubbock, Grant Allen, and Helmholtz, are surpassed in quantity and

interest by those which appear in the larger and more sensitive, if less highly instructed mind of Browning. The value of any man's information lies most in his philosophy of the universe, which coördinates it, sheds light upon it and binds it to the higher interests of the soul. Here Browning is a superior master, by having always a more vitalizing vision of man's destiny under God—a vision which never could have permitted in him the obscurations of Tennyson's "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After." But above these is the personal unit—Browning himself, with his intenser faith,—the utterance of his closely related and evenly blended powers. If he paints a landscape, it is as truly an appeal to the heart as it is to the head. Here, for example, are the grasp and moulding power of Rousseau. We are with the latter in Fontainebleau.

"Oh, good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth,
This autumn morning ! How he sets his bones
To bask i' the sun, and thrusts out knees and feet
For the ripple to run over in its mirth ;

Listening the while, where on the heap of stones
The white breast of the sea-lark twitters sweet."

The touch of beauty which glorifies all this strength reminds us of his brother artist, Daubigny, who could suggest an ocean in that white breast. Here again are the blitheness and ecstasy of Corot's dreamiest morning, suddenly localized in spring's quivering branch and thrilled bud :

“ This is a spray the Bird clung to,
 Making it blossom with pleasure,
Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,
 Fit for her nest and her treasure.
 Oh, what a hope beyond measure
Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet hung
 to, —
So to be singled out, built in, and sung to ! ”

In all this—in the fact that the bird translates the life and passion of the nature below her rank and gives it all the shiver of a progressive destiny, things are tending man-ward. There is the ever-dramatic human interest, however lyrically it may be stated. Browning's stairway of existence begins with crude stuff in ooze and slime, but it rises steadily with ever-developing splendour until it leans against the throne of God.

Man can no more commune with nature if she be not man-infused and man-making, as she slowly realizes her own dream, than man can commune with God if God be not in man as a father has his being in the child. Nature's language is comprehensible and interesting to man only because man's symphony is in the wind and his own lay is in the chaffinch's song. This is very human, but it is as far from our current human talk by our book-made birds as dynamics is from mechanics.

“ Oh, to be in England
 Now that April's there,
 And whoever wakes in England
 Sees, some morning, unaware,
 That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf
 Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
 While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
 In England—now !

“ And after April, when May follows,
 And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows !
 Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
 Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
 Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's
 edge —

That's the wise thrush; he sings each song
twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture!"

Both Tennyson and Browning—prophets because poets—uttered much of the philosophy of evolution and showed many of its modes of interpreting nature before the evolutionists had even found a name. Browning's dramatic vigour, his penetrative light discovering and portraying the significance of forces here and there flashing out, his all-defying songfulness when mere things would clash and he must wait for the "C major of this life," and willingly "try to sleep"—these come from his glad discernment of a man-ward up-going in and through nature—a movement for whose progress he often gives a shout and always has a song. He knows how nature has trembled with her load and by what a sacrificial route man comes. So he is not offended in Him who incarnates all law, saying as He comes near to Calvary: "My Father worketh hitherto and I work."

"Oh, long ago
The brow was twitched, the tremulous lids astir,

The peaceful mouth disturbed; half uttered
speech
Ruffled the lip, and then the teeth were set,
The breath drawn sharp, the strong right-hand
clenched stronger,
As it would pluck a lion by the jaw;
The glorious creature laughed out even in sleep!"

No less an expositor than Mr. Stopford Brooke has pointed out what appears to him as the deficiency of Tennyson's love and appreciation of nature. He says: "His natural world is not of itself alive; nor has it anything to do with us of its own accord. It is beautiful and sublime: we can feel for it admiration or awe; but it sends nothing of itself to us. It is the world of the imaginative scientific man who has an eye for beauty and a heart to feel it." Browning's natural world is the world of a philosopher who goes beneath the achievements of science.

In any event, if this is true of Tennyson, we may say more of Browning, in another direction. There may be little in nature for the poet, unless man is by her side, or by his side, when Tennyson considers nature; there is less in nature for Browning, unless she herself at her

best is man's history rather than his picture-gallery. She is also his servant more than his mistress. He must learn the higher things from man and the highest from God in man—from the Incarnation.

“Round the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain's
rim :

And straight was a path of gold for him,
And *the need of a world of men for me.*”

So nature is to him like a living pedestal out of which the statue has grown ; and nature cannot reveal any greatness or loveliness without creating a demand for a noble figure—for man all-glorious, *above* her as well as *of* her. As Browning surveys both nature and man, the richer the way man came, the richer must man be, having thus come within the range of the vision of this poet and philosopher. Man's very body is nascent with divine and upspringing potencies, and his soul lives in the indwelling God :

“Rejoice we are allied
To that which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive !

A spark disturbs our clod ;
 Nearer we hold of God
 Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I
 must believe.

“Then, welcome each rebuff
 That turns earth’s smoothness rough,
 Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go !
 Be our joys three-parts pain !
 Strive, and hold cheap the strain ;
 Learn, nor account the pang ; dare, never
 grudge the throe !

“For thence,—a paradox
 Which comforts while it mocks,—
 Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail :
 What I aspired to be,
 And was not, comforts me :
 A brute I might have been, but would not
 sink i’ the scale.”

No scepticism with its learned manners, however arrogant in the arid realms of pedantry, can resist the fine invasions of a faith like this, at once so scholarly and uplifting. Browning’s warmth is generated at the same dynamic source which produces his light. This is well exemplified in his poems : “Christmas Eve and Easter Day.” The Göttingen professor

out-Arnolds Mr. Matthew Arnold in the cool, if not frigid manner, yet patronizing and ghostly enough, as he also treats of the "mythical character of Christ and Christ's religion." He has no great tasks beating in his blood and demanding more than this shadow of a faith. To him the Christian vision does not upbear a man; *man bears it up* as he does most of his so-called consolations. There is fine irony in Browning's words addressed to this theologic or neologic speaker who has just broken "into his Christmas Eve's discourse." Many a minister may learn much, here, of the completer statement of much with which a bumptious parishioner may be only stammering; and he will learn more of the manner of meeting it. Browning shows the good humour such an one must possess in dealing with one who has this burden upon him. He says to the professor:

"Go on, you shall no more move my gravity
Than, when I see boys ride a-cock horse,
I find it in my heart to embarrass them
By hinting that their stick's a mock horse,
*And they really carry what they say carries
them."*

We cannot help following the eager steps of such earnest humanity as Browning depicts, from the close chapel so un-æsthetic and crowded with unintellectual humanity to Rome's St. Peter's with its grandeur and worse superstitions. But no superstition, however, is so vacuous as the "exhausted air-bell of the critic" in the lecture-hall where the spectacled professor makes small dust of the "Christ-myth."

The soul of man is still "incurably religious." God and nature have not been destroyed. But what of nature? Why shall we "consider the lilies, how they grow," if there is nothing in this success of man's having kept a respect for the soul, which has been all the while uttering its inner appeal for the reality which he finds in Christ alone, and breaking down the arrogant fortress of negations recommended by the Göttingen professor? Light is not found in the unctiousness of this ardent orthodoxy, we admit; but let us go out from its hot and thick air, not merely to get a clean breath, but to get the healthful rhythm of nature in our blood! They who go with Browning will see better; they do see better. They

see nature, according to this nobler manner of true science—a manner not supplied by the Göttingen professor. They see nature both as truth and loveliness. But we must go deeper than science into the very spirit which informs and rules ; and this Browning has done, leaving us a universe where the head is taught and the heart is charmed. Browning will always teach men how accurately one may deal in laboratories with a globule of hydrogen and oxygen, chemically constituted, and how scientifically one may also think about such a physical fact as a moon, and yet how a lunar rainbow may live and tremble with something greater far ; for

“ Suddenly

The rain and the wind ceased, and the sky

Received at once the full fruition

Of the moon's consummate apparition.

The black barricade was riven,

Ruined beneath her feet, and driven

Deep into the West ; while bare and breathless,

North and South and East and West lay ready

For a glorious thing that, dauntless, deathless,

Sprang across them and stood steady.

'Twas a moon-rainbow, vast and perfect,

From heaven to heaven extending, perfect
 As the mother moon's self, full in face.
 It rose, distinctly at the base

With its seven proper colours chorded,
 Which still, in the rising, were compressed,
 Until at last they coalesced,

And supreme the spectral creature lorded
 In triumph of whitest white,—
 Above which intervened the night.

But far above the night, too, like only the next,
 The second of a wondrous sequence,
 Reaching in rare and rarer frequency,

Till the heaven of heavens were circumflexed,
 Another rainbow rose, a mightier,
 A fainter, flushier, and flightier,—
 Rapture dying along its verge.
 O whose foot shall I see emerge,
 Whose, from the straining topmost dark,
 On to the key-stone of that arc?

* * * * *

He was there,
 He Himself, with His human air."

In Browning's experience with life and truth which is the substance of his poetry, *man*—and Browning furnishes man with brain, heart, will and voice—simply breaks through assumption, tears away disguises, because he is so deadly in earnest as to right and wrong; and so, it is also in

man's desolating presence that self-sufficient rationalism falls into painted rags ; and it is likewise in man's self-respecting grasp that Love's hand finds a human need holding to it with desperation of destiny.

"He was there,—

He Himself *with His human air !*"

In "Christmas Eve" love is constantly asserting her province, and what the intellect of the Göttingen professor misses, the weary soul keeps, by its grasp upon that garment, by the vision of that face seen through love :

"Love was the starting thing, the new ;

Love was the all-sufficient, too ;

And seeing that, you see the rest,

As the babe can find its mother's breast

As well in darkness as in light ;

Love shut our eyes and all seemed light."

On the other hand, there is no finer picture of the narrowing process of rationalism, of how unreasoning reason is, if she walks alone. Browning sees the "exhausted air-bell of the Critic." The atmosphere may be bad where what

we name superstition reigns, in that dis-
senter-chapel, but

“ The critic leaves no air to poison ;
Pumps out with ruthless ingenuity
Atom by atom,—and leaves you—vacuity.”

There are many such examples of the conduct of our modern rationalist in the pages of this poet, but perhaps there is none whose intellectual prepossession and critical analysis so dash themselves to pieces before our eyes, in their effort to discover the meanings of that which is too great and too personal for such a method of appreciation. But at length the true rationalism comes. The verses which follow these which I have quoted, in which the Spectator muses on what he has heard, are very strong indeed. Position after position must yield and does yield, as the same reason which has been stimulated into activity goes into the rationalist's view of Christ. Inch after inch is given up to the deeper reasoning which at last makes its proof that Christ is not an affair of abstract reasoning at all, but an affair of personal life.

For Arnold is right, even in the matter of finding true faith: "Conduct is three-fourths of life," and Browning sings:

" My fact is, .

'Tis one thing to know and another to practice
And thence I conclude that the real God-function
Is to furnish a motive and injunction
For practicing what we know already.
And such an injunction and such a motive
As the God in Christ, do you waive and ' heady,
High-minded,' hang your tablet-votive
Outside the fane on a finger-post?
Morality to the uttermost
Supreme in Christ, as we all confess,
Why need we prove would avail no jot
To make him God, if God he were not?
Where is the point where himself lays stress?
Does the precept run—' Believe in good,
In justice, truth, now understood
For the first time ' ?—or, ' Believe in me,
Who lived and died, yet essentially
Am Lord of Life ' ? Whoever can take
The same to his heart, and for mere love's sake
Conceive of the love—that man obtains
A new truth; no conviction gains
Of an old one only, made intense
By a fresh appeal to his faded sense."

Once let us get hold of God's idea of man, whether we obtain that estimate

and plan through nature, which is God's studio apparently littered about with broken bits of marble and many tools, yet the place where man was fashioned; or through the blood of crucifixion, the altar-pain of ages, the cross of Calvary,—once, I say, let our pulpits gain this divine valuation of man and the reasons for such valuation, and then appeal may be made to man as God's child, who has "the geometry of the City of God" in his brain and heart. This interior congeries of potencies and prophecies within man's personality will create havoc when it has such a voice as Browning gives to human nature, when it stands to answer falsity of any sort. Often it need not speak at all. The better and more eloquent the statement of anything less than the whole truth as to man, his intuitions, conscience and hope, the more certainly it tumbles to pieces or shows its deadly incompleteness in the presence of man's soul claiming itself and its destiny.

Take such a poem as "Cleon," and you will see at once what the Paganism which made possible our use of a materialistic philosophy which has so splendid a singer.

as Swinburne, may do and may not do with the human spirit's insistent needs. Cleon resists the new revelation and is a child of the past. We are back in the time before Christianity had made for the world a new atmosphéré; we are where human thought and hope are too large for the old beliefs, and where, as yet, faith has no reality to which she can look. Suddenly we step into the atmosphere of St. Paul,—a light! but the darkness comprehendeth it not, though Paul has just quoted from Aratus: "For in Him we live and move and have our being"—and we see instantly that the light *does* comprehend the darkness. Higher and higher, as the pagan thinks of it, does life rise in its keen demands—demands all so sure of disappointment, until it seems quite impossible that it should not reach its aching hand of developed need through the gloom and take hold of a life beyond. Yet that ache and the guess which half denies itself are the best the Pagan knows. He cries out:

"Every day my sense of joy
Grows more acute, my soul intensified

By power and insights more enlarged, more keen ;
 While every day my hairs fall more and more,
 My hand shakes, and the weary years increase —
 The horror quickening still from year to year,
 The consummation coming past escape,
 When I shall know the most, and yet least enjoy —
 When all my works wherein I prove my worth,
 Being present still to mock me in men's mouths,
 Alive still, in the phrase of such as thou,
 I, the feeling, thinking, acting man,
 The man who loved his life so over-much,
 Shall sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,
I dare at times imagine to my need
Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,
Unlimited in capability
For joy, as this is in desire for joy,
 — *To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us :*
That, stung by straitness of our life, made strait,
On purpose to make prized the life at large —
Freed by the throbbing impulse we call death,
We burst there as the worm into the fly,
Who, while a worm still, wants his wings. But
 no !

Zeus has not yet revealed it ; and alas,
 He must have done so, were it possible.

* * * * *

Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew,
 As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,
 Hath access to a secret shut from us ?
 Thou wrongest our philosophy, O King."

Cleon has stated his longing too manfully, too fairly, to carry us with his prejudice and doubt. Here is a man, indeed,—that constantly authoritative being, at least with himself when he reasons in any manner whatsoever,—and the person who emerges out of the controversy inside the Pagan is not Cleon who complains of the fate of a philosophy which is more to him than he is to himself, as he says :

“Thou wrongest our philosophy, oh, King,”—

the man who emerges is the man in Cleon who is more than any of man's philosophies,—the man who is still heard saying :

“I dare at times imagine to my need,
Some future state.”

With this same man in us all, in the doubter and in the one who has shamefully sinned without at all doubting deliberately, we take another step. Matthew Arnold never so relied on conduct to clear up one's faith, as does Browning. If Browning can persuade one to do a great thing, one must come from it, believing greatly. Here is the appeal to history,

in man's case with himself. Emerson says: "Of immortality the soul, when well employed, is incurious. It is so well that it is sure it will be well."

"What is excellent,
As God lives, is permanent."

To these well-employed, Robert Browning will come with a reasonable faith in the life to come. He will so build them up with the immortalities of truth and love that they will have an eye for immortality. He will so infuse into their life and thought and spirit, a movement of hope that it will be reason enough. "We are saved by hope." Indeed, there is no other hope for the intellectual man than the faith, not of the intellect alone, but of the will which *does* the immortal truth and right in every act, and of the heart which *feels* it in its love. Strongest of all singers does Browning seem when this faith fills his soul:

"Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
I am nearing the place.

The power of the night, the press of the storm,
 The post of the foe ;
Where he stands, the Arch-Fear, in a visible form,
 Yet the strong man must go ;
For the journey is done and the summit attained,
 And the barriers fall,
Though a battle to fight ere the guerdon be
 gained,
 The reward of it all,—
I was ever a fighter ; so—one fight more
 The best and the last !
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes and
 forbore
 And bade me creep past.
No : let me taste the whole of it, fare like my
 peers,
 The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt ; in a minute pay glad life's ar-
 rears
 Of pain, darkness and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
 The black minute's at end,
And the elements rage, the fiend-voices that rave
 Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace, out of
 pain,
 Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul ! I shall clasp thee again,
 And with God be the rest ! ”

“The heart,” says Pascal, “has reasons

which the reason cannot know," and it is the reason of both the heart when its love finds out the sweetness of something loved by loving it, and that of the will when it realizes the strength of something which its purpose has taken into itself by acting it,—*these* are the reasons which Mr. Browning proposes that our rationalism should accept along with the reasons of the intellect. Then we have the power of the heart's reason for immortality—a Love looks out upon the future—and we feel what a gain comes to the whole life. So Love continually reveals. It is all so reasonable, too. God is Love. Christ is the Incarnate Love of God for man as well as the incarnation of man's upward-looking love for God. Calvary is the spot where that Love opened its blood-red glory of sacrificial power. Is it strange that the intellect should need Love's revelations wherewith to understand these divine things? Of course, Love has its wise agnosticism which Browning recognizes—it has a mystic quality from which he does not try to free it.

Perhaps never in the history of religion

and poetry, as these have found a mutual interest to defend or a common throne of influence to assert, has any singer come more close to portraying perfectly the oscillation of the soul of a man (more than the sceptic, or the physician) between faith and doubt, than has Browning in his "Karshish, the Arab Physician." This first-century Oriental practitioner is on his holiday. He is spending some days in the interesting country of Jesus and Lazarus. Every element of the subtle and contented scepticism of dreamy ages resists the appeal which, because Karshish is a man, is made to him by the story of Lazarus, his death and Christ's power at his grave to renew his life, as Karshish now sees it. The distinguished leech's pride as a leech matches the leech's interest in his profession and in his friend Abib. Seeing to it that no fact shall be missed by either of them, yet these collide in his experience with this perplexing case. The letter he writes attests his careful studiousness. He has found many gums and herbs and made many observations as to diseases of which he writes to his master-physician Abib ; and this case of

“mania subinduced by epilepsy” must be dealt with fairly. He writes :

“The man,—it is one Lazarus a Jew,
Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,
The body's habit wholly laudable,
As much indeed beyond the common health
As he were made and put aside to show.”

He cannot find any other equation for all the quantities, save this—it is a case of one restored from epilepsy. Is this a complete diagnosis? For a physician, yes; for a man, scarcely. Lazarus imparts to Karshish something of his own intensity of mind. Jerusalem is trembling with revolution, but the case here is of more importance. Perplexity and a settled bigotry—these form the cloud against which play the wonder and the feeling of the man, Karshish. “*I wish it could be so,*”—is a feeling which Christianity has found at every point of man's hope. It has been met in Christ who is always saying to our power and tendency to believe the best: “*If it were not so, I would have told you.*” But Karshish has only this to say and to say it twice: “*It is strange.*” Once he cradles the tiny life of his “will

to believe" in the soft folds of his wonder,
as we all must cradle our faith in wonder,
and he writes again :

"This man so cured regards the curer then
As—God forgive me—who but God Himself,
Creator and Sustainer of the world,
That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile !
—Sayeth that such an One was born and lived,
Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his
own house,
Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know,
And yet was . . . what I said nor choose repeat,
And must have so avouched Himself in fact,
In hearing of this very Lazarus,
Who saith—but why all this of what he saith ?
Why write of trivial matters, things of price
Calling every moment for remark ?
I noticed on the margin of a pool
Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort
Aboundeth very nitrous. *It is strange.*"

The man still oscillates like a pendulum
between the faith which nearly captures
him and holds him, because a real man
must believe high things which are accordant
with his high destiny,—between this faith
and the doubt that buries the man's mind
enswathed in a theory about

great facts. It is shallow grave, indeed, for no man can bury himself to his own satisfaction. At last, and once more his "will to believe" nearly conquers, and he writes in that *doubt of his doubt* which is so near to faith :

"The very God ! Think, Abib ; dost thou think ?
 So the All-great were the All-loving, too —
 So, through the thunder comes a human voice,
 Saying, ' O heart I made, a heart beats here !
 Face, my hands fashioned, see it in Myself,
 Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of
 Mine ;
 But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,
 And thou must love Me who have died for thee.'
 The madman saith He said so : *it is strange.*"

*Is it as strange, after all, when one lives
 with Christ, as that it cannot be true ?*
 Scepticism is more credulous than faith,
 oftentimes.

Man—God's child—man, the believer, the lover and the doer of God's will is victorious over all, in Mr. Browning's philosophy. He triumphs even over the "*aber-glaube*" and the mannerisms, the superstitions and assumptions which grow like parasites upon the burdened form of faith. Bishop Blougram with his sophistry,

the papal ambassador with his pietistic craft, the Church functionary ordering his tomb at St. Praxed's with a turn for Latinity, conceit and sensuality,—all these go down with the Göttingen professor, before the face of man looking to God in Christ. Christ is man's way to God, because evermore He was, is and shall be God's way to man. At length—and this is but a sketch of Browning's thought presented as strongly in as many other poems which I cannot even mention—the philosophy of our poet makes us rich with his noblest gift, "The Ring and the Book"—that annal of the soul where Sinai thunders and flames, until we hasten from the terror thereof and flee towards Calvary.

The theology of "The Ring and the Book" is scriptural; it is also both human and divine. It is an antidote to all superficial notions of sin; and the hideous portrait of iniquity it presents, in loathsome record or self-confession, demonstrates the goodness and severity of God in conscience. Every character in the poem should be known in every minister's study, else some day the minister shall fail to hear God's voice in man. As a

study in clinical psychology, it has no equal for dreadful spiritual self-illumination, since Dante and Shakespeare. A sinner has made here such an account of himself, that the pope, lawyers, victims, and courts only give their slight comment on the interior disaster we behold. Guido has sinned past more than these, as he went down. He must swiftly call upon them to save, when the mob comes and he would fain return.

“Who are these you have let descend my stair?
 Ha, their accursed psalm! Lights at the sill!
 Is it ‘Open’ they dare bid you? Treachery!
 Sirs, have I spoken one word all the while
 Out of the world of words I had to say?
 Not one word! All was folly—I laughed and
 mocked!
 Sirs, my first true word, all truth and no lie,
 Is—save me notwithstanding! Life is all!
 I was just stark mad,—let the madman live
 Pressed by as many chains as you please pile!
 Don’t open! Hold me from them! I am yours
 I am the Granduke’s—no, I am the Pope’s!
 Abate,—Cardinal,—Christ,—Maria,—God,
 Pompilia, will *you* let them murder me?”

Pompilia? Compared with God, the Almighty, who is Pompilia?—She is, as

Guido sees, greater because she is nearer to him than God Himself, as Guido knows God; she is abler to save Guido now. But the order of these persons is most suggestive of moral values in the mind. These—"Abate, Cardinal, Christ, Maria, God,—Pompilia"—mark the stations of moral influence past which he went to peril. Now these, *in their order*, must be seen, grasped and held, if the sinner be made safe. God is more authoritative and real in Pompilia, than in His own far-off greatness. What a cry for God incarnate in humanity! Always, in crises, the soul of man cries out for a human manifestation of God. It is the beleaguered Saul of Israel again crying: "Bring me up Samuel." Whom have we most sinned against? He must save us. Neither Pompilia nor Samuel can succour Guido or Saul now. God has been sinned against—and God in humanity.

It is in his "Saul" that Browning rises to such a faith in God's Incarnate Love, that everything which man at his best has ever dreamed or wished of God is caught and held for adoration within a thorn-crowned man's evangel. God becomes

Christ and Christ is God ; and this is our poet's faith—that God will do what David at his noblest would do, if he could. David sings :

“ I believe it ! 'Tis Thou, God, that givest, 'tis
I who receive :
In the first is the last, in Thy will is my power
to believe.
All's one gift : Thou canst grant it moreover,
as prompt to my prayer
As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms
to the air.
From Thy will stream the worlds, life and na-
ture, Thy dread Sabaoth :
I will ?—the mere atoms despise me ! Why am
I not loth
To look that, even that in the face too ? Why
is it I dare
Think but lightly of such impuissance ? What
stops my despair ?
This ;—'tis not what man Does which exalts
him, but what man Would do !
See the King—I would help him but cannot,
the wishes fall through.
Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow
poor to enrich,
To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would
—knowing which,
I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak
through me now !

Would I suffer for him that I love ?, So wouldst
Thou—so wilt Thou !

So shall crown Thee the topmost, ineffablest,
uttermost crown —

And Thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave
up nor down

One spot for the creature to stand in ! It is by
no breath,

Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins
issue with death !

As Thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty
be proved

Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being
Beloved !

He who did most, shall bear most ; the strong-
est shall stand the most weak.

'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for !
my flesh, that I seek

In the Godhead ! I seek and I find it. O
Saul, it shall be

A Face like my face that receives thee ; a Man
like to me,

Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever : a
Hand like this hand

Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee !
See the Christ stand ! ”

This is a dauntless and divine faith.
It involves man's essential trust in God ;
it involves all that God has put in trust in
man. The autograph of Love is upon

the universe, and it is in the heart and hope of humanity. "*For My name's sake*," thus He hath written it. \

A great Personal Fact rises and remains before the consciousness of mankind—a living Christ, at once the manifestation of God and the divine illustration of man. Truths and forces celestial centre themselves there—let no human lips seek profanely to define them! Expect words to be inadequate —

"These filthy rags of speech, this coil
Of statement, comment, query and response,
Tatters all too contaminate for use,
Have no renewing ; the Truth, is, too,
The Word."

So Browning is the poet of reverence. A human soul survives and asserts its personality in these poems—a soul so real and so true, so unswerving by native vitality that sin at last must somewhere tell its own story—all of it ; in fevered Guido's dream so honest that the whole past is realized, or in a bower where Siebald cannot crown Ottima "magnificent in sin," since Pippa has just been singing :

“God’s in His Heaven,
All’s right with the World”;—

and let us here reflect that it is not God in nature who makes that proposed coronation a profanation of the highest—even though one of the guilty pair says:

“Buried in wood we lay, you recollect;
Swift ran the searching tempest overhead;
And ever and anon some bright white shaft
Burned through the pine-tree roof, here burned
and there,
As if God’s messenger through the close wood-
screen
Plunged and replunged his weapon at a venture,
Feeling for guilty thee and me; then broke
The thunder like a whole sea overhead”—

but it is God in humanity—it is Pippa;
and this is another hint of the moral motive-power which can come only in the Incarnation of God in humanity.

A human soul survives which gathers up the wealth of ages past and feels that these are but fragments falling from the working of the great God—a human soul in whose future the greatest forces run to assert its certainty and sublimity. Every great idea of our time, every noble feeling

of our age, which we have seen stimulated into life by Wordsworth, Shelley and Coleridge, examined and treated by Arnold, made musical by Tennyson, falls into harmony, deep, swift, true, in Browning's song. With an honesty lambent as flame is pure and with a sureness of aim altogether manly, he has lifted a rod which embodies God's purpose and he has smitten the rocks in lonely deserts and found their treasured fountains. Deeper than Arnold, he has spoken in the midst of Arnold's languor and chill, and lifted up the banner of intelligent courage; even richer and stronger in endowment than Tennyson, he leads the race to a severer discipline and a firmer possession, often bidding us leave our Handel and listen to Beethoven. I know of no discovery for which he will not prepare the soul—I know of no experience for which his lines will not equip the minds of modern men. A broad theology, deep and true as broad, a distinct assertion of the place of the individual in all life and destiny, and a fatal questioning of aged error are his; and for them who are to lead others to a lasting faith his muse is

teacher and friend. For the spiritual eye whose vision looks beyond, he stands alone, supreme. Life's defeats to all who have aspirations greater than performance—life's struggles to all who let the life of God stir within them—life's ultimate triumph and peace to man—these have no such psalmist as he. And God at last shall have His Victory, for

“There shall never be one lost good ! what was
shall live as before,

The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying sound !

What was good shall be good, with for evil so
much good more ;

On the earth the broken arcs, in the heaven
the perfect round.

■ The high that proved too high, the heroic for
earth too hard,

The passion that left the ground, to lose itself
in the sky,

Are music sent up to God by the lover and the
bard ;

Enough that He heard it once ; we shall
hear it by and by.”

THE END

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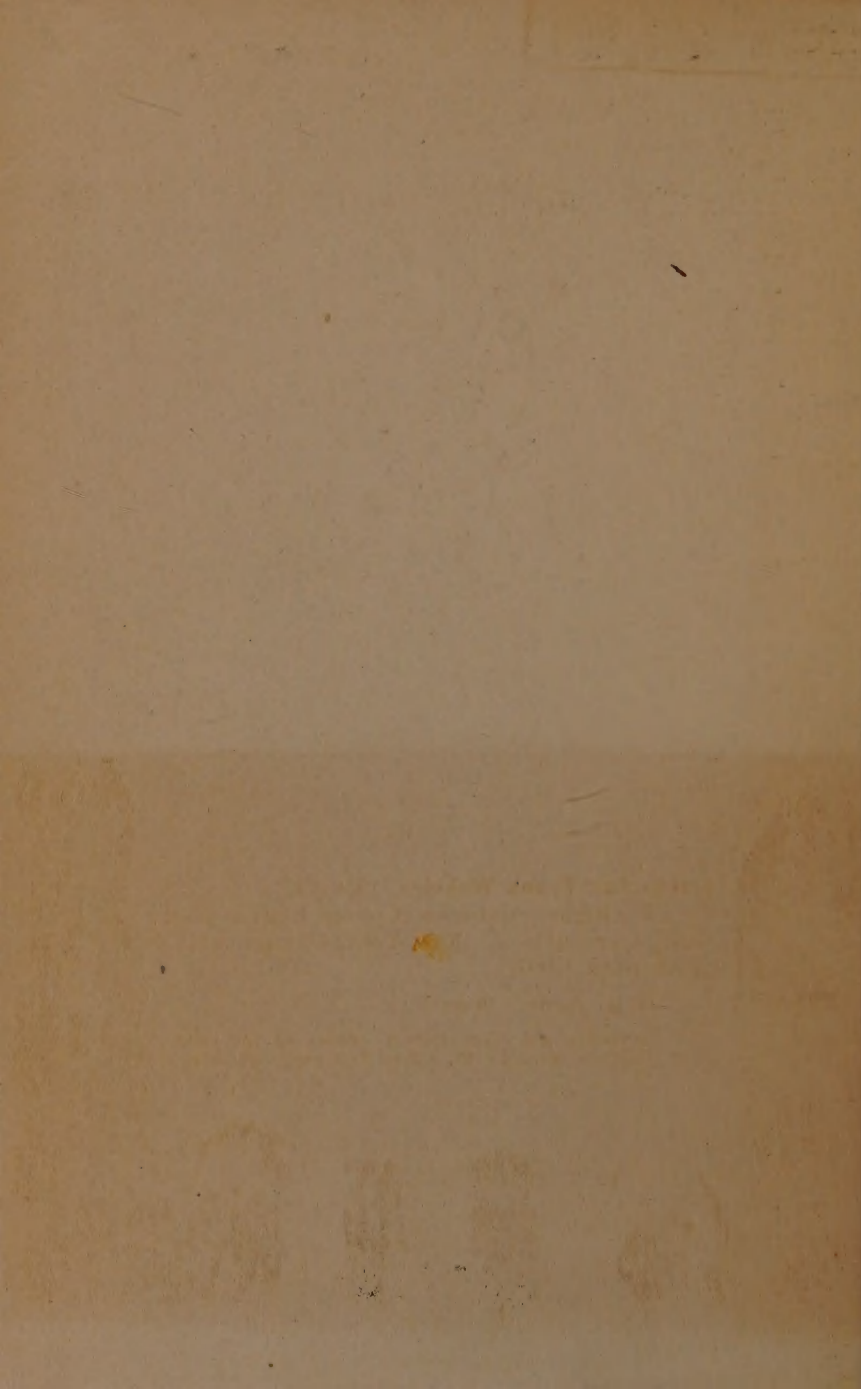
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